A DISCOURSE

Concerning a

Judge of Controverſies

IN

MATTERS of RELIGION.

BEING AN

ANSWER

TO SOME

PAPERS

ASSERTING

The Neceſſity of ſuch a JUDGE.

by Dr. Wm. Sherlock.

Written for the private Satisfaction of ſome Scrupulous Perſons.

And now Publiſhed for Common Uſe.

With a PREFACE concerning the Nature of Certainty and Infallibility.

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Jo. BATTELY.

THE PREFACE.

WHen I first undertook to answer these Papers, I little thought of writing a Book, but when it was writ, I was more easily perswaded to make it publick; for such kind of Objections as these, our People are daily assaulted with, and our Ministers daily troubled to answer; and therefore it will be very serviceable to both to print such a plain Discourse as this, which whatever defects it may have, I am pretty confident, does sufficiently expose the weakness and sophistry of such Arguments.

The truth is, this ought not to be made a Dispute, and the fundamental Miscarriage is, that our People are not taught, or will not learn, to reject such captious Questions as tend only to Scepticism, and deserve not to be confuted; which I think, I may have liberty to say, now I have confuted them; and to shew the reason I have to say so, shall be the subject of this Preface.

It is thought (and certainly it is so) the most compendious way to reduce Protestants to the Communion of the Church of Rome, *to perswade them, that they can have no certainty of their Religion without an infallible Judge, and that there is no Infallibility but in the Church of* Rome: *Now could they prove that the Church of* Rome *is infallible, this indeed would be an irresistible Reason to return to her Communion; but this they say little of now-a-days, this they would gladly have us take for granted, especially if they can prove that we can have no certainty without an infallible Judge, and therefore this they ap-*

ply themſelves to, to run down Proteſtant certainty, and firſt to make men Scepticks in Religion, and then to ſettle them upon Infallibility.

Now the way they take to do this, is not by ſhewing that the Reaſons on which Proteſtants build their Faith, either of Chriſtianity in General, or of thoſe particular Doctrines which they profeſs, are not ſufficient to found a rational Certainty on; for this would engage them in particular Diſputes, which is the thing they as induſtriouſly avoid, as if they were afraid of it; but inſtead of this, they declaim in general about the nature of Certainty; ask us, how we know that we are Certain; if we rely upon Reaſon, other men do not reaſon as we do, and yet think their Reaſon as good as ours; if on Scripture, we ſee how many different and contrary Expoſitions there are of Scripture; and how can we be certain then that we only are in the right, when other men are as confident, and as fully perſwaded as we? Now all this is palpable Sophiſtry, and no other direct Anſwer can or ought to be given to it, but to let them know, that after all they can ſay, we find our ſelves very certain; and that their attempt to prove us uncertain without confuting the Reaſons of our Certainty, is very fallacious.

1. *As for the firſt, whether I am certain or not, no body can tell but my ſelf, for it is matter of Senſe, as Sight and Hearing is; and they may as well ask me, how I know that I ſee and hear, as how I know that I am Certain; I feel that I am ſo, and that is Anſwer enough.*

2. *And therefore when they ask me, how I know that I am certain; if this Queſtion have any ſenſe in it, it muſt ſignifie on what Reaſon I found my Certainty; for nothing can create Certainty in the Mind, but that Reaſon and Evidence which we have of things, as we can ſee with nothing but Light. Now if Certainty reſults only from the Reaſon of things, it is ridiculous to expect any other Anſwer to that Queſtion, how I am certain, than my giving the Reaſons of my Faith; for there is no other Reaſon of Certainty, than thoſe particular Reaſons, for which I believe any thing: And this of neceſ-*

neceſſity brings the Controverſie to Particulars. There is no one Reaſon of my Certainty; becauſe the ſame Reaſon will not ſerve for all things; and therefore before I can give them my Reaſon, I muſt know what they require a Reaſon of, and then I will give it them. And thus we are juſt where we were; and if they will prove that we have no Certainty, they muſt confute all the Reaſons of our Faith, and diſpute over all the Controverſies between us; a Task which they are not willing to undertake; and yet there is no other way to prove the Faith of Proteſtants uncertain, but by proving that they have no certain Reaſons of their Faith.

Yes, you'l ſay, it is proof enough, that we cannot be certain, becauſe we every day find ſo many confident men miſtaken, who yet think themſelves as certain as we do, and therefore we may be miſtaken, notwithſtanding all our aſſurance and confidence that we are not. Now this indeed would be an unanſwerable Argument, did we found our Certainty upon the meer ſtrength and confidence of Perſwaſion; for men may be very confident becauſe they are ignorant; and we readily grant, that an ignorant Confidence may betray men into the groſſeſt Errors; and therefore though every confident man thinks himſelf in the right, we never think another man in the right meerly becauſe we ſee him confident, which is a plain ſign that all men diſtinguiſh between Confidence and Certainty. Wiſe men, who would not be miſtaken, are very careful that their Confidence do not out-run their Reaſon, for Reaſon is the Foundation of Certainty; and no man can have greater Certainty than he has Evidence for what he believes. Now ſince men may be equally confident with or without Reaſon, the only way to try the Certainty of their Faith, is to examine the Reaſons whereon it is founded; if we can confute their Reaſons, we deſtroy their Certainty; if we can't, it is ridiculous to charge their Faith with Uncertainty; for that is a certain Faith which is built upon certain and immoveable Reaſons; and if the Certainty of Reaſon makes men certain, and ſome mens Faith may be built upon certain Reaſons, though others are

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miſtaken, then the confident miſtakes of ſome men is no proof, that the Faith of all men is uncertain.

I am ſure all Mankind think thus, who think any thing, which is a good ſign that it is a very natural thought. No man thinks himſelf the leſs certain, becauſe he ſees other men differ from him. The Foundation of this very Argument againſt Proteſtant Certainty owns this.

The Argument is, That we can never know when we are certain, becauſe of the multitude of differing Opinions which are maintained with equal Confidence on all ſides. Now that this is no plain and convincing Argument againſt Certainty, is evident from the Argument it ſelf, which confeſſes, That notwithſtanding all this diverſity of Opinions, all men are very confident of their own: which I think proves, that every man believes that he may be certain; nay does actually think himſelf certain, though he knows that other men differ from him; and that I think proves, that they do not believe that no man can be certain, becauſe ſome men are confident, and yet miſtaken. And it is equally ſtrange to me, both that if this be ſuch a convincing Argument (as is pretended) no man ſhould believe it, and that the Advocates of Infallibility ſhould think to impoſe upon the World, with ſuch a palpable piece of Sophiſtry as all men deſpiſe.

There is no way to prove the Faith of Proteſtants to be uncertain, but to prove that the Principles whereon we build our Faith are uncertain; for if there be certain means to know the true Faith, then though ſome miſtake, others may be in the right; and thoſe who are in the right, may know they are in the right; for the Mind does as evidently diſcover clear and bright Truth, as the Eye does the Light. He who feels Truth, will know himſelf certain, and no man can confute him, without confuting the Reaſon of his Faith.

This ſhews how abſurd it is to ask us, How we know that we are certain, and at the ſame time to refuſe to hear the Reaſons of our Faith; or to attempt to prove that we are not, and cannot be certain, without confuting the Reaſons which make us certain. For Certainty reſults from the Reaſons of

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our Faith, as ſight does from light; and men may as well be certain without Reaſon, as ſhew how they are certain, without aſſigning the Reaſons which make them certain. And therefore the only Trial of our Certainty is by examining the Reaſons whereon we build our Certainty. And this is a plain direction to our People how to anſwer this captious and ſophiſtical Queſtion. As to ſhew this very briefly by way of Queſtion and Anſwer.

Queſt. How do you know that you are certain, or are not deceived in thoſe things, of which you think your ſelves moſt certain?

Anſw. *What do you mean, Sir? How I know that I underſtand? Or how I know a good Reaſon when I hear it? Truly I know this, only as I know how I ſee; God has given me Eyes to ſee with, and a Faculty of Reaſon to underſtand with, and I truſt my Eyes, and my Underſtanding, and if you can tell me any better way, I ſhall gladly hear it.*

Queſt. But do not all men ſay as you do, that they truſt their own Underſtanding? And are you not ſenſible what a fallible thing Human Underſtanding is? Do you not daily ſee how many men are miſtaken? And how then can you be ſure that you are not?

Anſw. *Yes, I am very ſenſible that many confident men are miſtaken; but ſure this is not the original fault of their Underſtanding, for then all men muſt be miſtaken; and then we muſt either be certain without our Underſtanding, which is to know certainly without knowing at all; for there is no other Faculty whereby we can know, but only the Underſtanding, or elſe we muſt be contented to know nothing; for that knowledge which has nothing of Certainty, does not deſerve the name of knowledge.*

Queſt. But what is this to the purpoſe, what the Cauſe of ſuch Miſtakes are? For let the Cauſe be what it will, if men are ſtill miſtaken, how do you know that you are not miſtaken too?

Anſw. *Yes, this is very much to the purpoſe; for if the fault be not in the Underſtanding, if Human Underſtandings are*

capable

capable of knowing Truth, then it does not follow, that becauſe ſome men are miſtaken, therefore all are; nay, it does not follow, that becauſe ſome men are very confident in their miſtakes, therefore no man can be certain that he is not miſtaken. For if the Underſtanding is capable of diſtinguiſhing between Truth and Error, as the Eye can diſtinguiſh its Objects, then it can know Truth when it ſees it; and this is the foundation of Certainty.

Queſt. But does not every man, who is in an Error, think that he ſees Truth?

Anſw. *Yes, and ſo does a man who is in a Dream, think that he ſees, and talks with his Friends; but a man who is awake knows that he does ſo; and though there are a great many Dreamers, you can never perſwade a man, who is awake, that he is in a Dream; and there is as much difference between the vigor and diſtinctneſs of Perception in Error and Truth, as there is between the deluſions of a Dream, and the quick and ſtrong Perceptions of a man awake. And thus a man, who ſees truth, does as certainly know that he ſees it, as the Eye does that it ſees light.*

Queſt. And do you then reſolve all Certainty into your own Senſe and Feeling, which is a kind of Natural Enthuſiaſm, and in moſt men nothing elſe but the ſtrength of Fancy and Imagination?

Anſw. *No, by no means! I feel my ſelf certain indeed, but my Certainty does not reſult from bare confidence and aſſurance that I am in the right, which men may have, who are in the wrong; but from the clear and irreſiſtible Evidence of Reaſon, which pierces the Mind, as Light does the Eye, and captivates the Underſtanding into a full and immoveable aſſent. I have ſuch Reaſons for what I believe, as do abundantly ſatisfie me in the Truth and Certainty of my Faith, and when I feel the Evidence and Conviction of Reaſon, I feel my ſelf certain.*

Queſt. But ſtill the ſame Queſtion returns, How you are certain of your Reaſon? For all men pretend to ſome Reaſon or other for what they believe, and think their Reaſon certain, or elſe they would not believe it.

Anſw.

Anſw. Right! and will think themſelves certain ſtill, till you have confuted their Reaſons, and convinced them, that they are miſtaken: For there is no other way of dealing with reaſonable Creatures, but to rectifie their Miſtakes, and by ſtrong and ſolid Reaſons to confute the vain and empty appearance of it. And if you can do this, I ſhall very gladly hear you, and when you pleaſe, will give you the particular Reaſons of my Faith.

Queſt. What do you mean? That I ſhould diſpute all the Points in Controverſies between us? There is a Task indeed! There will be no end of wrangling at this rate; No, no! Since you are not certain, and cannot be certain in your way, I will direct you how you may be certain, without troubling your ſelf with Diſputes.

Anſw. *I beg your Pardon, Sir, I am very certain; or however you can never convince me that I am not certain, without hearing what the Reaſons of my Faith are, and proving them to be uncertain; for my Certainty is founded upon Reaſon, and if my Reaſons be certain, what ſhould make me uncertain?*

Queſt. Do you not ſee, that Reaſon it ſelf is uncertain? How do Men differ in their Reaſons? What contrary Expoſitions of Scripture do they give? and what Certainty then in this Way?

Anſw. *I hope, Sir, you will not ſay, That there is no ſuch thing as true Reaſon, or that true Reaſon is uncertain, or that Scripture truly expounded is an uncertain Rule: Now though other Men reaſon fooliſhly, and interpret Scripture perverſly, what is that to me, if I reaſon right, and expound Scripture truly? as I believe I do, and ſhall believe ſo, till you can prove, that I don't. My Certainty I told you is founded upon certain Evidence, and you can never ſhake my Certainty, till you can ſhake that. It would be great and contemptible weakneſs in me, to diſtruſt the moſt plain and convincing Reaſon, becauſe you tell me, that other Men are of another mind; if you can prove, that their Reaſon is better than mine, I will yield to the beſt Reaſon; but I cannot renounce my Reaſon,*

while I believe it true, nor ſuſpect it, while I believe it certain.

Queſt. When two Men differ in their Opinions, and oppoſe Reaſon to Reaſon, muſt not one of them be miſtaken?

Anſw. *Yes, it may be both; but neither of them think themſelves miſtaken meerly becauſe they differ from each other, for that would end the Diſpute. If the differences in Religion were an Argument againſt the Certainty of all Religions, there were an end of Religion; for* Infallibility *it ſelf could not eſcape, which is denied by more Chriſtians than believe it; and therefore thoſe who would be certain, muſt look well to the Reaſons of their Faith, and thoſe who will prove my Faith to be uncertain, muſt prove that the Reaſons on which I believe are either falſe or uncertain; and thoſe who are not contented with this, quarrel with the ſtate of human Nature, and may help themſelves as they can.*

This, I think, is ſufficient for a Preface to this Diſcourſe. Let but Proteſtants maintain their ground, and not be perſwaded, that they have no certain Foundation for their Faith, till Papiſts have confuted the particular Reaſons of their Faith, and I dare undertake, they will never ſee any Reaſon to queſtion their Faith, nor find any want of an infallible Judge.

But yet ſince ſome Men ſo deſpiſe that Certainty, which reſults from a clear and diſtinct Knowledge of things, in compariſon with Infallibility, *let us briefly conſider what the true Notion of* Infallibility *is, and how much it excels a certainty of* Knowledge.

1. *Firſt then I obſerve, That Infallibility belongs to Perſons, not to Things. A Propoſition cannot be fallible or infallible, but true or falſe; for* Fallible *ſignifies, that which can be deceived,* Infallible, *that which cannot be deceived, and therefore can be applied only to intelligent Beings, who are capable of either. So that to ſay, that any Propoſition is infallibly true, beſides the impropriety of the Expreſſion adds nothing to Truth; for that which is true is true, and can neither be more nor leſs true.*

Secondly,

Secondly, Perfect Infallibility is nothing else, but an universal Certainty of Knowledge: As for Instance; God only is infallible by Nature; but Infallibility *is a Negative, and there are no Negatives in the Divine Nature; and therefore if we would understand what God's Infallibility is, we must reduce it to some positive Perfection, and that can be nothing else but Infinite Knowledge; for this Reason we say, that God is Infallible, because he knows all things, and he who knows all things can never mistake. So that it is Knowledge which is the perfection, Infallibility is only a mode of Speech, to signifie the most perfect certainty of Knowledge.*

Thirdly, And therefore Infallibility is not opposed to certainty of Knowledge, with respect to the evidence and certainty of Perception; for Infallibility is nothing else but Certainty, and such a Certainty as results from the most perfect Knowledge of the reason and nature of things, as it is in God, which is only true Infallibility. There is no difference between Certainty and Infallibility in God, and the difference between the Certainty of Creatures and the Infallibility of God is this, that the one is a finite and the other an infinite Knowledge; for nothing can be by nature infallible but infinite Knowledge, but a finite Knowledge, which does not extend to every thing, may in some things be deceived, but as far as it reaches it may be certain, and that is a kind of a finite Infallibility. A fallible Creature does not signifie a Being, which can never be certain, but a Being which has not a natural knowledge of all things, and therefore may be deceived in those things which are without the sphere of its knowledge; and therefore it is as absurd to say, That we cannot be certain of any thing, because we are not infallible, as to say, That we can know nothing, because we do not know all things.

Fourthly, And therefore Fallibility, or Infallibility, do not alter the nature of Certainty. What is the Certainty of God, but those clear and bright Idea's of Truth in the divine Mind; for he is not certain, because he is infallible, but he is infallible, because he is certain; and thus in proportion to

that diſtance which is between God and Creatures, our Certainty is nothing elſe, but a clear and diſtinct knowledge and perception of the reaſon and natures of things; and whereever this is, how fallible ſoever the Perſon is in other matters, he is certain ſo far; and to demand any farther Reaſon of Certainty, than the clear and diſtinct knowledge of things, is to demand ſome other Reaſon of Certainty than Knowledge; and thus we may doubt of the Certainty of God, as well as of Men, if we do not allow a clear and diſtinct Knowledge to be Certainty, for there is nothing beyond this.

Fifthly, And hence it follows, That as to things which are knowable by the light of Nature, our Certainty reſults from the clear and diſtinct perceptions of our own minds, and depends on the truth and certainty of our natural Faculties. As for Inſtance; Thoſe Impreſſions which our Senſes make on us, and thoſe Perceptions they awaken in our minds, are ſo ſtrong and forcible, that they create a natural Certainty, and we cannot doubt, whether what we ſee, and feel, and hear, be real or not; thoſe natural Idea's and Notions we have in our minds, thoſe firſt Principles of Reaſon and Diſcourſe, appear ſo plain and Self-evident to us, that we can no more queſtion them than our own Being, and ſeek for no other Proof of them, but their own natural Evidence; As that both parts of a Contradiction cannot be true; That nothing can be and not be, at the ſame time; That no Power can make that never to have been, which once was; That nothing that ever was not, can be without a Cauſe. Theſe Propoſitions are ſo Self-evident, that the Mind aſſents to them without demanding any other Proof but themſelves, which ſhews, that the very higheſt Certainty of all is nothing elſe but an intuitive Knowledge, or the Minds ſeeing and diſcerning that natural Evidence which is in things; and thoſe who will not allow a clear and diſtinct knowledge to be the Foundation of Certainty, muſt reject all Self-evident Principles, which we can have no other Proof of but themſelves, at leaſt no better, for we cannot reaſon in infinitum, *and therefore muſt come*

to

to ſome firſt Principles, which are known only by their own light and evidence.

Next to this, are thoſe Notions and Idea's, which are ſo eaſie and natural to our minds, that moſt men believe them by a kind of natural ſenſe and inſtinct, without reaſoning, about them; and thoſe who have no mind to believe them yet cannot rid their minds of them; ſuch as the Being and Providence of God, and the Eſſential differences between Good and Evil. Theſe are the next degree to Self-evident Principles, for they are natural Notions, which indeed may be proved by Reaſon, and muſt be ſo, when we meet with men who will deny them; but yet a well diſpoſed Mind has a natural byaſs and inclination to believe them, ſees them to be true and evident without reaſoning about them. This is very plain, the leſs of Reaſoning there is required in any caſe, the more there is of Certainty: Firſt and Self-evident Principles admit of no Reaſoning, Natural Notions require none; and as for all other matters, the nearer they lie to firſt Principles or natural Notions, the more certain and evident they are; nay, we have no other certainty of the deductions and concluſions of Reaſon, but their manifeſt connexion to ſome Principles and Notions, which may be known without Reaſoning; which ſhews, as I ſaid before, That all natural Certainty is at laſt reſolved into an intuitive Knowledge; and the Certainty of Reaſon is nothing elſe, but the connecting thoſe things which we do not know by Nature, with thoſe which we do.

Sixthly, Where natural Knowledge and natural Certainty ends, there Revelation begins; but ſtill Certainty is not Infallibility, but Evidence, and natural Evidence too: For there can be no communication between God and Creatures, as to revealing his Will, but by the mediation of our natural Faculties; whether the Object be naturally or ſupernaturally revealed, we have only our natural Faculties to know and underſtand with, and therefore we can have no more than natural Evidence of ſupernatural Revelations, though this Evidence is owing to ſupernatural Cauſes. As for Inſtance;

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An inſpired Prophet, though he be infallible as far as he is inſpired, yet it is not his Infallibility, that makes him certain that he is inſpired, but that certain Evidence he has that this Revelation comes from God; which muſt either be by ſome external and viſible Signs, or by ſome ſuch vigorous impreſſion upon the Mind, as carries its own Evidence with it, which what it is no man can know, but he who has it. As for thoſe who are not inſpired themſelves, but muſt learn from inſpired Men, their Faith muſt depend upon that evidence they have for the Revelation; the natural Notion of Gods Veracity is the reaſon, why they believe what they know is revealed; they muſt uſe their own Faculties to underſtand what is revealed, and they muſt judge of the truth and certainty of a Revelation from ſuch Marks and Characters as are evident either to Senſe or Reaſon.

So that Infallibility *ſounds very big, but ſignifies very little in this Diſpute; for all Certainty, whether in natural or revealed Knowledge, muſt be reſolved into Evidence, not into Infallibility. Though an inſpired Prophet is an infallible Oracle in thoſe things which he ſpeaks by Inſpiration, yet it is not his Infallibility, but that Evidence he has that he is divinely Inſpired, which makes him certain; much leſs can any man be infallibly certain, who is not infallible himſelf, how many infallible Teachers ſoever there are in the World. For we may as well ſay, That a man may be wiſe with another mans Wiſdom, as infallible by another mans Infallibility. Every man muſt know and underſtand for himſelf, and Infallibility is only ſuch a perfect degree of Knowledge as is not liable to any miſtakes; and if no man has any Knowledge, but what he has in himſelf, then he has no degree of Knowledge, but what he has in himſelf, and therefore can never have an infallible Knowledge, unleſs he himſelf be infallible.*

Suppoſe then we ſhould grant, That the Pope, or Church of Rome *were infallible, what advantage has a Papiſt for Certainty above a Proteſtant? Does the Infallibility of the Pope make them all infallible? And if every Papiſt be*

not

not infallible, then they can have no more Certainty than fallible Creatures are capable of, and ſo much I hope may be allowed to fallible Proteſtants. The Authority of a Revelation in matters divinely Revealed, anſwers to natural Evidence in things knowable by the light of Nature; as we cannot doubt of things which are plain and evident to our Underſtandings, ſo we cannot doubt of what we know is Revealed by God; but then as we muſt uſe our Reaſon to judge of the natural Evidence of things, ſo we muſt uſe our Reaſon to judge of the truth, and evidence, and ſenſe of a Revelation, and it is the ſame Mind and the ſame Underſtanding which muſt judge both of natural and revealed Knowledge; and if our Underſtandings be not infallible, I know not how an infallible Judge, or an infallible Revelation, which are external things, ſhould beſtow an internal Infallibility on us. And therefore after all their brags of Infallibility, *Papiſts themſelves muſt be contented if they can be certain; for if Infallibility did ſignifie ſomewhat more than Certainty, yet Certainty is the moſt that a fallible Creature can have; for it is impoſſible for any Creature to have Infallibility, who is not infallible himſelf. And this I hope will make them a little more favourable hereafter to Proteſtant* Certainty; *for whatever can be objected againſt Certainty in general, as diſtinguiſhed from* Infallibility, *will as effectually deſtroy the Popiſh, as the Proteſtant* Certainty; *for Papiſts are no more infallible Creatures, than Proteſtants are.*

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING A Judge of Controverſies; BEING AN ANSWER TO SOME Papers, &c.

The Paper.

I Am not ſatisfied with the Foundation of the Proteſtant Religion. For if God has certainly left no Viſible Judge of Controverſies (as we aſſert) and yet grant that there are things neceſſary to Salvation to be believed, as well as things to be practiſed; and that the Scriptures are to a demonſtration not plain, even in what we dare not diſown to be Fundamentals, as the Trinity, &c.

Anſwer.

Theſe Objections againſt the Proteſtant reſolution of Faith, ſtrike not only at the foundations of the Proteſtant Religion, but of Chriſtianity it ſelf. For if the Diſpute were about the truth of Chriſtian Religion, by ſuch Arguments as they can prove the Chriſtian Religion to be true, we will prove the Proteſtant Religion, which is nothing elſe but the Chriſtian Religion, purged from the Corruptions and Innovations of Popery. Now it would be very pleaſant to hear a Popiſh Prieſt in a diſpute with Turks or Pagans about Chriſtianity, urge the Authority of a viſible Judge of Controverſies; and if there be no way to inſtruct an Infidel (who cannot be preſumed to own the Authority of any Judge) what Chriſtian Religion is, and to convince him of the truth of it, but by Reaſon and Scripture, either this is a good way, or there is no certain foundation for Chriſtianity; and let any Man ſhew me a Reaſon, why Chriſtians may not underſtand their Religion the ſame way, that Heathens muſt be taught it. This was the way which Chriſt and his Apoſtles took with Jews and Heathens, and they had no other way to take with them.

The Jews had a written Law, which no Authority could contradict; and therefore our Saviour did not only work Miracles, but appealed to the Scriptures both for the Authority of his Perſon, his Miracles, and his Doctrine, and left every man to his own liberty to judge for himſelf, what he muſt believe; which ſhews, that Miracles themſelves are no Authority againſt a written Law, for then the Jews could have had no pretence for their Infidelity, and there had been no reaſon for Chriſt and his Apoſtles to have diſputed with them out of the Scriptures.

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The Heathens had no ſtanding Revelation, and therefore the bare Authority of Miracles was ſufficient to confirm that teſtimony the Apoſtles gave of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, and the Doctrine which he preached; and thoſe who would not believe meerly for the Miracles ſake, were convinced by Reaſon and Argument; for thus St. *Paul* diſputed with the Philoſophers at *Athens*, as well as with the *Jews*; and thus the Primitive Doctors dealt with the Infidels in their days, as we learn from thoſe many excellent Apologies they wrote in defence of Chriſtianity. But then thoſe who did believe at firſt upon the Authority of Miracles, were particularly inſtructed in the Faith of Chriſt out of the Law and the Prophets, which though they were originally given to the Jews, yet are the venerable Records of the Chriſtian Faith, to which the Apoſtles had recourſe in expounding the Chriſtian Doctrines.

Thus Chriſtianity was taught at firſt, and if this be not a ſolid Foundation, the Chriſtian Faith has none; neither Chriſt nor his Apoſtles (though they were Infallible) made their own Infallibility the only reaſon of mens Faith, but referred them to the Law and the Prophets, which they expounded to the conviction of all honeſt and teachable Minds; and if they would not believe upon theſe terms, they muſt continue Infidels.

And that this way of reſolving Faith into the Authority of a viſible Judge, was not known in the Chriſtian Church even in the Apoſtles days (and yet methinks St. *Peter*'s Authority, if he had any ſuch Authority, ſhould have been better known in thoſe days, than at ſuch a diſtance of time) is evident from thoſe early Hereſies, which ſprang up in the Church. For let any reaſonable man tell me, how it is poſſible there ever ſhould have been any Hereſie in the Church, if all Chriſtians had received the Authority of an Infallible Judge together with their Chriſtianity, Men might have renounced Chriſtianity and the viſible Judge together;

but had they then acknowledged a viſible Judge, it had been a contradiction to pretend to the name of Chriſtians, and to oppoſe the Doctrine of the Infallible Chair. Had there been a viſible Judge of Controverſies in the Apoſtles days known to all Chriſtians, it had been impoſſible there ſhould ever have been any Hereſies in the Church, as thoſe men muſt grant, who think it neceſſary there ſhould be ſuch a viſible Judge, to make all men of a mind, and to prevent the riſe and growth of Hereſies; which muſt ſuppoſe, that the Authority of a viſible Judge would do this, or elſe this Argument cannot prove the neceſſity of a viſible Judge: If then the Appointment of a viſible Judge would certainly prevent all Hereſies, and yet from the beginnings of Chriſtianity there have been Hereſies in the Church; this is a demonſtration, there was no viſible Judge in thoſe days.

Well, but if there be no viſible Judge of Controverſies, how ſhall we arrive at any certainty in our Religion? for the Scriptures are to a demonſtration not plain, even in what we dare not diſown to be Fundamentals, as the Doctrine of the *Trinity*.

Now, 1. Suppoſe there are ſome difficult paſſages in Scripture, which are not obvious to every common underſtanding; Can we not therefore underſtand what is plain, becauſe ſome things are difficult? Can any thing be plainer than the firſt and ſecond Commandments, not to give divine Worſhip to any being, but the Supreme God, and not to worſhip God by Images and Pictures? Can any thing be plainer, than the Inſtitution of the Lords Supper in both kinds? than St. *Pauls* diſcourſe againſt Prayers in an unknown Tongue? Can any thing be plainer, than what is evident to our very Senſes, that Bread and Wine is not tranſubſtantiated into the Body and Blood of Chriſt? Men, who will believe contrary to the plain words of Scripture, contrary to the evidence of Senſe and Reaſon, which certainly ought to be conſulted in expounding Scripture, who would prove that to be

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in Scripture which is not in it, or that not to be in Scripture which is there, have ſome reaſon to complain of the obſcurity of Scripture, for the Scriptures were never written to prove what they would have proved; but yet they may be very plain to men, who only enquire what the Scripture teaches, without forcing ſuch Senſes upon it as it does not teach: Thoſe, who will prove that from Scripture which is not in it, to be ſure muſt prove it very obſcurely, and then to excuſe the obſcurity of their Expoſitions, charge the Scriptures with obſcurity. Though all things are not equally plain in Scripture, yet all men may underſtand what is plain; and it is a ſtrange perverſneſs to ſay nothing is plain in Scripture, becauſe ſome things are not plain; or that we cannot be certain of the ſenſe of plain Texts, becauſe there are ſome obſcure Texts.

Secondly, I do affirm, that every thing that is neceſſary to be believed is plain in Scripture; for elſe how ſhould we know that we muſt believe it, or that it is neceſſary to ſalvation? But then by plain, I do not mean, that it is plain to every man, and at the firſt ſight; but it is plain to men who apply themſelves to the ſtudy of the Scripture, and have skill and ability to do it; and may be made plain to every man, who has the common underſtanding of a man, without any biaſs and intereſt, who will attend to the Inſtructions of the Learned. And this is reaſon enough to call it plain, if learned men by ſtudy and induſtry can underſtand it, and if the unlearned may be taught to underſtand it. Thus Mathematical Demonſtrations are certainly plain, for if a Demonſtration be not plain, nothing is; but yet it is not every man can underſtand them without a Teacher; but ſince thoſe who do ſtudy Mathematicks can underſtand them, and any man of ordinary capacity, who will attend to the Inſtructions of a skilful Maſter may underſtand them, we may call them plain, though they are not obvious at the firſt ſight. For this purpoſe Chriſt appointed

pointed an order of men in his Church, whoſe buſineſs it ſhould be, to ſtudy the Scriptures themſelves, and to teach others, not to impoſe on their Faith by their meer Authority, which our Saviour has expreſly warned us againſt, to call no man *Maſter* upon Earth, and which St. *Paul* expreſly diſclaims being Lords of their Faith; but to open their Underſtandings, and by eaſie ſteps to lead them into the true Senſe of Scriptures. Thus he taught his Diſciples himſelf, as appears from all his Sermons; thus the Apoſtles taught the Chriſtians of their days; and this is the only teaching I know of; for to teach men to believe without underſtanding, is to teach them to believe they know not what nor why.

But *the Doctrine of the Trinity is not plain in Scripture.* An Aſſertion which ſtrikes at the very Fundamentals of Religion, and juſtifies all the ancient Hereſies, which can never be confuted but out of the Scriptures. For, is the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Scriptures, or not? If it be not there, how comes it to be an Article of Faith? and if it be not plain in the Scriptures, how can any man tell it is there, when it is not plain that it is there? The primitive Fathers, who oppoſed thoſe ancient Hereticks, wrote great Volumes to prove the Doctrine of the Trinity from the Scriptures, and therefore I preſume did think it might be proved from Scripture.

This being a Doctrine, which can be known only by Revelation; if it is not plain in Scripture, it is plain no where, and ſo not the Object of our Faith, unleſs they can ſhew us another Revelation beſides and above the Scriptures. The only Argument the Paper urges to prove the Doctrine of the Trinity not to be plain in Scripture, is, That *ſome denied the Divinity of the Son, ſome believed the Holy Ghoſt not to be a ſeparate Perſon, but only an Attribute of God.* That is, whatever ſome men deny, is not plain; and therefore Chriſtianity it ſelf is not plain, becauſe Jews and Turks and Heathens deny it. Is the Form of Baptiſm plainly contained in Scripture, to

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Baptize in the Name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt? and yet many of the ancient Hereticks, who corrupted the Doctrine of the Trinity, would not uſe this Form, which is as good an Argument, that this Form is not plain, as that the Doctrine of the Trinity is not: And indeed, if one be plain, the other muſt be, unleſs we will ſay, that we are baptized in the Name, that is, into the Faith and Worſhip of Creatures.

The Paper.

And I think the aſſembling thoſe Councils we receive as General, ſhews that their Oppoſers were conſiderable.

Anſwer.

How conſiderable? For Numbers, or Intereſt, or Zeal, or Authority? they were inferior upon all theſe accounts to the general Enemies of the Chriſtian Faith, and why ſhould not the number of Infidels be as good an Argument againſt Chriſtianity, as the number of Hereticks againſt any one Article of the Chriſtian Faith? But this is a fatal Inſtance to the Popiſh, as well as the Proteſtant reſolution of Faith, and ſomewhat worſe; for the Scriptures never complied with Heretieks, but the pretended viſible Judge did, when the Pope of *Rome* ſubſcribed the *Arian* Confeſſion. But what courſe did theſe *Nicene* Fathers take to confute the Hereſie of *Arius*; did they not alledge the Authority of the Scriptures for it? Conſult their Writings, and ſee what their Reaſons are; and when ſuch a venerable Council thought the Scriptures clear and plain in this Point, is the diſſent of Hereticks a greater Argument, that they are not plain, than the determination of ſuch a Council, that they are? That this was the conſtant Doctrine of the Catholick Church from the time of the Apoſtles, was a good confirmation that they expounded Scripture right; but had

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it been poſſible that there ſhould have been a Traditional Article of Faith, which the Scripture ſaid nothing of, meer unſcriptural Tradition could be no ſufficient foundation of Faith, and that for this Reaſon, becauſe we could not be ſure what the Original of ſuch a Tradition was. For the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles give us the moſt certain Account what their Faith was, and how ancient ſoever any other Doctrine may be, we have no reaſon to think it came from the Apoſtles, if there be nothing of it in the Scriptures.

The Paper.

And that thoſe good Fathers did not think, after their witneſſing out of Scripture and Tradition the Belief handed down to them from Father to Son, that the Chriſtians had ſo much as a liberty of examining after them: Since they poſitively Anathematized all thoſe that did not receive their Decrees, for which if they had no Authority, the primitive Fathers were the greateſt Tyrants in the World to refuſe the bleſſed Means of Salvation to thoſe, that for ought appeared were as ſincere as themſelves, and the generality of Diſſenters made Scripture their Rule, as well as we do. This I do not alledge, that I know of any truly general Council we reject, but this appears to me, that in the beſt of times there was thought a Power left in the Church without Appeal to every mans Reaſon; and the Guides of the Church did not think a man ſafe, though he to the beſt of his underſtanding did expound Scripture, if he did not follow the ſenſe of the Church.

Anſwer.

This Paragraph is deſigned to prove, that there is a Power in General Councils to determine Controverſies of Faith without appeal to every mans Reaſon; and that the Fathers aſſembled in thoſe firſt Councils did believe they had

had ſuch a Power, that when once they had determined what the true Faith was, no man might examin after them. Now whatever the Fathers of the Council believed of themſelves, it is plain other men did not believe it. The Hereticks whom they condemned, did not acquieſce in the Authority of the Council; which yet they would certainly have done, had it been the general Belief of Chriſtians in that Age, that the Decrees of General Councils were final and concluſive, to be believed by all men, and to be examined by none: For the moſt obſtinate Hereticks could never have out-faced ſuch a prejudice as this. After the Council of *Nice*, the Fathers did appeal to mens private Reaſon, if writing Books in juſtification of the Doctrine of the Trinity be ſuch an Appeal, as is evident from the Writings of *Athanaſius*, *Hilary*, St. *Auguſtine*, and others. Nay, it is ſtrange there ſhould be ſo many other Councils convened about the *Arian* Controverſie after the deciſion of the *Nicene* Fathers, if that had put an end to all farther Diſputes and Appeals; which is a good Argument that the Chriſtians did not then think that the Authority of a Council was ſo ſacred, that no man muſt queſtion it, when ſucceeding Councils examined, and many times reverſed the Decrees of former Councils; nay, that Councils, which were not general, ſhould make bold with the Decrees of General Councils, which is but a degree removed from every man's private Reaſon.

But the Council anathematized all thoſe that did not receive their Decrees; and does this prove that they denied all Chriſtians a liberty of examining after them? Might they not declare ſuch Doctrines to be damnable Hereſies, and reject ſuch men out of their Communion, without believing their Decrees to be ſo infallible and ſacred, that no man muſt examine them? Do not the Proteſtant Churches do this without pretending to ſuch an abſolute Authority over mens Faith? A fallible man, who is certainly aſſured that any Doctrine is a damnable

Hereſie, may declare it to be ſo; and if he have any ſuch Authority in the Church, he may caſt ſuch men out of Communion; and this is all that an Anathema ſignifies, and all this may be done, and yet men diſpute on, and judge for themſelves; and therefore to denounce an Anathema, does not prove that he that does it, has ſuch an infallible and uncontroulable Authority, as muſt ſilence all Diſputes, and captivate mens Reaſons and Underſtandings to his Dictates.

As for that Paſſage, *That the Guides of the Church did not then think a man ſafe, though he to the beſt of his underſtanding did expound Scripture, if he did not follow the Senſe of the Church*, it has ſomething of truth, but a great deal of ſophiſtry in it. It is ſo far true, that a man, who embraces damnable Errors is not ſafe, how firmly ſoever he be perſwaded of the truth of them, and that it is very hazardous to contradict the Senſe, not of any Council, which may be a pack't Conventicle of Hereticks, nor of any particular Age of the Church, which may be very ignorant, or very corrupt, but of the Univerſal Church in all Places and Ages; but in this Senſe it is nothing to the preſent purpoſe: And if the meaning be, as it ſeems to be, that it is dangerous for a man to uſe his own Reaſon and Judgment in oppoſition to the Decrees of Councils, it may ſometimes be ſo, and ſometimes not, as the Council is; and whatever the event be, every man muſt judge of that; it may prove dangerous to a man to uſe his Reaſon, if he do not uſe it right; but yet there is no help for it, but every man muſt uſe his Reaſon, or act like a Fool.

But poſſibly it will be asked, What Authority then do we allow to Councils? and I ſhall very freely ſpeak my mind of it. 1. In Caſes that are doubtful, the Judgment of ſo many wiſe and learned and pious men from all parts of the Chriſtian Church, is a very probable Argument of the truth of their Decrees; and no modeſt man will openly oppoſe what they determine; unleſs

unleſs it appears that there was ſomething of Faction and Intereſt at the bottom, or that the Reaſons whereby they were over-ruled, were ſo weak or ludicrous, as to render their Judgments contemptible: For if the Opinion of one learned man be ſo conſiderable, much more is the deliberate Judgment of ſo many great and good men. Secondly, The Authority of ancient Councils is very conſiderable, as they were credible Witneſſes of the Apoſtles Doctrine and Practice, and the conſtant Faith of the Church in the preceding Ages; which is a mighty ſatisfaction to find by theſe venerable Records, that what we now believe, was the Faith of the Church in the beſt and pureſt Ages; before it was divided by Schiſms and Factions, or corrupted with eaſe or liberty, or wanton diſputes. Thirdly, General or National Councils have authority to determine what Doctrines ſhall be publickly profeſſed and taught in their Churches, and be made the Articles of Church Communion, as it muſt neceſſarily be, if there be any authority in the Church. For it is fit that the Faith of the Church ſhould be one, and thoſe who have the government of the Church, muſt have the care of the Faith. But then this Authority does not oblige any man to believe as the Church believes, and to receive all ſuch Decrees without Examination; but only if we will live in Communion with ſuch a Church, we muſt own the Faith of that Church, for ſhe will allow none to communicate with her, who do not. Now if the Faith and Worſhip of ſuch a Church be Pure and Orthodox, the Church is in the right in requiring Obedience and Conformity to her Decrees and Conſtitutions, and thoſe who refuſe it, muſt anſwer it both to God and Men; if her Faith be corrupt, ſhe abuſes her Power in impoſing it on Chriſtians, and no man is bound to believe what is falſe, becauſe the Church defines it to be true. If you ask whoſe Judgment ought to take place, the Judgment of the Church, or of every private Chriſtian?

I anſwer, The Judgment of the Church of neceſſity muſt take place as to External Government, to determine what ſhall be profeſſed and practiſed in her Communion; and no private Chriſtian has any thing to do in theſe Matters; but when the Queſtion is, What is right or wrong, true or falſe, in what we may obey, and in what not? here every private Chriſtian, who will not believe without underſtanding, nor follow his Guides blindfold, muſt judge for himſelf, and it is as much as his Soul is worth to judge right: For if he reject the Faith and the Communion of the Church without a juſt and neceſſary Cauſe, he is a Heretick and a Schiſmatick, liable to the Cenſures of the Church in this World, and to the vengeance of God in the next. If he reject an erroneous and corrupt Communion, he incurs the Cenſures of the Church, which in moſt Chriſtian Kingdoms are attended with ſome temporal Inconveniences; and if he imbrace it, he is in danger of a future Judgment: For *if the blind lead the blind, they ſhall both fall into the Ditch.* Theſe are the proper limits of all Human Authority, both in Church and State; below this there is no Authority, and above it, it is not Human Authority; for a blind Obedience can be due to none but God, and he himſelf ſeldom exacts it If we will grant Governours and Subjects to be men, who have the uſe of their own Reaſon and Judgment, it is impoſſible to ſtate the Caſe of Authority and Subjection otherwiſe than thus; That the Faith and Judgment of Governours, influences and directs their Government, and gives Laws of Faith and Manners to Subjects; and the private Judgments of Subjects direct them how far they are to believe and obey their Governours, and God himſelf Judges between them, and by his Providence prevents or over-rules all thoſe Diſorders which may happen either in Church or State in this World, and rewards or puniſhes both Governours and Subjects according to their deſerts in the next. And this ſuperſedes all farther Diſputes about ſome hard

hard Caſes, or the ſincerity or inſincerity of Governours or Subjects; for every man muſt of neceſſity judge for himſelf, and God will govern and judge us all; which there could be no pretence for, if we had not the free exerciſe of our Reaſon in the government of our ſelves.

The Paper.

But I know 'tis urged, The Church of England *is guided by Antiquity for the Interpretation of Scripture; but every one knows that there is great difficulty in that too even for Scholars, at leaſt I am told ſo; for no Church admits of all that is ancient, for ſeveral Hereſies are ſo; and ſince we ſay, Number makes nothing for Truth, and that all men may err, and that there is no certain mark by viſible Succeſſion to find out which are true Believers, in this Confuſion the Church of* England *muſt be very fortunate, not to retain too much, as the* Arians *and* Macedonians, *&c. ſay we do, or too little as the* Romaniſts *ſay.*

Anſwer.

The Church of *England* indeed has regard to the Doctrine of the Primitive Church in expounding Scripture, not that ſhe fetches all her Expoſitions from ancient Writers, but that ſhe takes care not to expound Scripture in contradiction to the ancient Faith of the Church contained in the ancient Creeds; and it requires no great skill in Antiquity to know what this Faith is which we repeat every day in the Apoſtles Creed; and this is a good Argument that we expound Scripture right, when the Senſe we give of it, is what the words and reaſon of the Text import, and agrees with the Faith of the firſt and pureſt Ages of the Church. Had we no ancient Records, we could find out the true Senſe of Scripture in all neceſſary Points of Faith; but the Traditionary Doctrine of the Church, where the Tradition is plain and clear

clear, and therefore eaſie to be known, is a great confirmation of thoſe Interpretations we give of Scripture in conformity to the ancient Belief, and confutes all the Evaſions and Criticiſms of Hereticks. For when the words of Scripture may with ſome Art be expounded to different Senſes, either to juſtifie ſome new or ancient Hereſies, or the Catholick Faith, we need not doubt but that is the true Senſe, which agrees with the uniform Belief of the Primitive Church, who were the beſt Judges what the Faith of the Apoſtles was, by whom the Scriptures were written; and though there were indeed very ancient Hereſies, yet nothing is plainer in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory than the diſtinction between thoſe ancient Hereſies and the Catholick Faith, and therefore Scholars cannot eaſily miſtake them; and as for thoſe who are unlearned, that ſhort and ancient Summary of the Catholick Faith, contained in the Apoſtles Creed, and expounded by the *Nicene* Fathers in their Creed, which is in every bodies hands, and part of our daily or weekly Service, is Security enough againſt all Fundamental Miſtakes.

The Chriſtians of the Church of *England* have a very plain and eaſie Reſolution of their Faith. As for the poſitive Articles of Faith, we have the ancient Creeds, which have been received in all Ages of the Chriſtian Church from the times of the Apoſtles; and which the moſt perverſe Hereticks cannot deny to have been the Catholick Faith; and yet we do not believe theſe meerly upon the Authority of Tradition, but becauſe we find all theſe Doctrines plainly taught in Scripture; and for this the meaneſt Chriſtian need not depend wholly upon the Authority of his Guides, but has liberty to examine their Expoſitions, and the Reaſons of them, which are ſo plain and convincing in the great and Fundamental Articles of our Faith, that an honeſt man, who meets with a skilful Guide, may ſatisfie himſelf about it, and ſee with his own Eyes.

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Now what greater aſſurance can we have in this caſe, than the harmony and conſent of Scripture and Tradition, which confirm and juſtifie each other? The Apoſtles no doubt preached and writ the ſame things, and it is a good Argument, That is an uncorrupt Tradition, which agrees with the Doctrine of the Scripture, and that that is a true expoſition of Scripture, which agrees with the ancient Formularies of Faith, delivered down to us by an unqueſtionable Tradition from the firſt Ages of the Church.

As for negative Articles, about which is our only controverſie with the Church of *Rome*, ſince nothing can be an Article of Faith, but what Chriſt or his Apoſtles have taught, we think it ſufficient to reject all ſuch Doctrines, as are not plainly and expreſly taught in Scripture, and this the meaneſt Chriſtian with the help of a Guide may underſtand. For [as in Reaſon it muſt be, when men will prove that to be in the Scripture which is not] the Scripture Proofs which are urged by the moſt learned Doctors of the *Roman* Communion, for their peculiar Doctrines, which we reject, are ſo apparently unconcluding, that it requires very little skill to confute them. And though this were reaſon enough of it ſelf to reject any Doctrine which arrogates the authority and neceſſity of an Article of Faith, that the Scripture does not teach it, yet in moſt caſes we can ſhew, and that to the conviction of the meaneſt underſtanding, which is honeſt and unprejudiced, that ſuch Doctrines are either in expreſs words, or by plain and neceſſary conſequence, rejected and condemned in Scripture, which is ſomewhat more than not to be taught there; becauſe it is certain no Church can have Authority to teach what the Scripture condemns.

And then as for Authority, we appeal to the beſt Authority of the Chriſtian Church, the three firſt Ages after the Apoſtles, who are the moſt credible Witneſſes (which is all the Authority they can have) of the Apoſtolick Doctrine

Doctrine and Practice, and can plainly prove from thoſe venerable Records, that the Doctrines and Practices in diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, were either never taught, or actually condemned by thoſe Primitive Fathers. And though in other caſes it is a hard thing to prove a Negative, it is not ſo here, becauſe the proof lies all on the poſitive ſide. For thoſe, who will teach ſuch Doctrines and Practices ought to prove them, for without ſuch a Proof they are to be rejected on courſe; and therefore if we can confute their Proofs, we need do no more; and this is a very eaſie Task, eſpecially with reference to the firſt three Centuries; for ſince they themſelves are now aſhamed of the counterfeit *Dionyſius*, their Decretal Epiſtles, and ſuch like ſpurious Writings, the wiſeſt of them pretend to very few Teſtimonies from the firſt Writers, and thoſe which they do alledge are ſuch lame ones, as need very little confutation.

Theſe are the Proteſtant Grounds of Faith, as it is profeſſed in the Church of *England*, and there is but one material Objection againſt the certainty of this way. That our Diſſenters pretend to Scripture as well as we, and ſo moſt Hereticks have always done; and as for Antiquity, the Church of *Rome* makes a greater noiſe with it than we do, and how then can a plain and unlearned man chuſe ſafely in ſuch variety of Judgments and Opinions?

Now the force of this Argument conſiſts in this, That becauſe ſome men miſtake, no man can be in the right; or becauſe ſome men may confidently believe they are in the right, when they are in the wrong, therefore no man can be ſure that he is in the right; which pretence would be laughed at in all other caſes, excepting Religion, and here I am ſure it deſerves to be ſo. There is a vaſt difference between confidence of Perſwaſion, and certainty of Knowledge; the prejudices of Education, the Authority of Guides, the byaſs of Intereſt, and ſuch like fallacious Principles may make men very confident, when

when they know little or nothing about the matter, or men may reaſon falſly, and think themſelves very confident, as a man in a Dream does; but can no man be certain he is awake, becauſe ſome men very confidently think themſelves awake, when they are in a Dream? The greateſt part of the World pronounce a haſty Judgment, before they are well awake, before they have conſidered the matter throughly, and weighed every circumſtance of it, and a man who has but half conſidered a thing, may with very good reaſon think himſelf certain ſo far, and yet may be groſly miſtaken, becauſe there is another half which he has not conſidered. Every man is ſenſible of this when he corrects a Miſtake, for he diſcovers ſomething which he had not thought on before, which makes him alter his Judgment about it; and therefore though ſome men are confident and yet miſtaken, it does not hence follow, that no man can be certain when he Reaſons right; for Truth lies ſo eaſie in a mans mind, who has throughly conſidered things, and has ſuch a native brightneſs and luſtre in it, that he can no more doubt of it, than whether the Sun be up when he ſees its light.

But let us conſider this Objection particularly, with reference both to Scripture and Antiquity.

1. It is Objected, That Hereticks pretended the Authority of Scripture, as well as the Orthodox, and our Diſſenters as well the Church of *England*. But what then? Is the Scripture of no uſe, becauſe ſome men uſe it ill? Is it not poſſible to find out the true ſenſe of Scripture, becauſe ſome men put a falſe ſenſe on it? Can theſe Hereticks be confuted out of the Scripture, or not? If not, why do we charge them with Hereſie? If they may, how are ſuch Hereſies, being fathered on the Scriptures, an Argument againſt ſtudying the Scriptures, and relying on their Authority? For we cannot confute Hereſies by the Scripture, unleſs we can underſtand the Scriptures; and if we may find out the true ſenſe of

Scripture, notwithſtanding that Hereticks put a wrong ſenſe on it, then we may be as certain, that we underſtand the Scriptures aright, as we are, that others do miſunderſtand them. But beſides this: Though Hereticks pretend to expound Scripture, yet they contradict the Faith of the Primitive Church, and therefore their Caſe differs vaſtly from the Caſe of the Church of *England*, whoſe Faith is founded both on Scripture and Apoſtolick Tradition, as I obſerved before. And as for our Diſſenters, our Diſpute with them is not about Articles of Faith, but the external Modes and Circumſtances of Worſhip, or the Government and Diſcipline of the Church; and the Queſtion between us is, Whether we muſt uſe no external Circumſtances of Worſhip, but what are preſcribed in Scripture; or, Whether the conſtant Practice of the Church from the days of the Apoſtles be not the beſt Comment on Scripture as to the external Government of it? And this, I think, is ſo baffled a Cauſe, that the *Romaniſts* are hard put to it when they uſe that Argument.

Secondly, As for Antiquity, the Church of *Rome* makes great boaſts of it, but they are very vain ones; and who can help mens pretending to Antiquity, when it is apparently againſt them? No man indeed can be a competent Judge of this, but thoſe who are skilled in Antiquity, and have examined their pretences; but there are ſome conſiderations which lye obvious to every man, and may ſerve to direct the unlearned what Judgment to make in this matter.

1. For had true Antiquity been on their ſide, what need had they of ſpurious and counterfeit Authors to make ſome appearance of Antiquity with? This has been the great Artifice of the Church of *Rome*, though they begin now to be aſhamed of it, ſince the learned Reformers have diſcovered the Cheat. Who pleaſes may ſee ſome account of this in an Engliſh Book, entituled *Roman Forgeries*; and this is reaſon enough to ſuſpect their pretences

pretences to Antiquity; for no man takes Sanctuary in Falſhood, who has Truth on his ſide.

2. Another Evidence of this is their corrupting Ancient Authors, and becauſe they can find nothing in them to their purpoſe, to inſert ſomething which is; but the plaineſt and honeſteſt confeſſion of this matter is their *Index Expurgatorius*, which corrects the Fathers, and orders the leaving out of ſuch Paſſages as make againſt them; now when they are forced to leave out and put into the Fathers, it is very ſuſpicious that they are convinced, the Fathers are not on their ſide.

3. Where they make the loudeſt Cry of Antiquity, the Scripture is either againſt them, or ſays nothing for them; and though we allow the Ancient practice of the Church in matters of Diſcipline and Government, to be a good Pattern for us to follow in ſuch particulars as are not expreſſed in Scripture, if they comply with the general Rules and Directions of Scripture; yet we do not think Antiquity it ſelf to be a ſufficient juſtification of any Doctrines of Faith, or new acts of Worſhip, which either the Scripture condemns, or does not teach; and this is a manifeſt difference between the Pretences of the Church of *England*, and the Church of *Rome*, to Antiquity. The Church of *England* juſtifies her Doctrines and Practices, both from Scripture and Antiquity, which is as ſure a foundation as we can poſſibly have; the Church of *Rome* alledges Antiquity (ſuch as it is) to prove ſuch Doctrines and Practices, as the Scripture either condemns, or knows nothing of. Now we think the Scriptures have the greateſt Antiquity, and are a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners, and that no other Antiquity can controul the Authority of the Scriptures. As for Inſtance: Suppoſe the Church of *Rome* could prove the Worſhip of Images, Praying to Saints and Angels, Prayers in an unknown Tongue, and Communion in One kind, &c. to have been anciently practiſed in the Church (though this they are never able

to prove) yet what is this to the purpoſe, when the Scripture expreſly condemns the Worſhip of Images, and giving Religious Worſhip to any other Being, but to God only, and by their own Confeſſion ſays nothing of the Worſhip of Saints; and that St. *Paul* diſputes deſignedly againſt Prayers in an unknown Tongue; and that our Saviour inſtituted his Supper in both kinds, and commanded them to drink of the conſecrated Cup, as well as to eat the Bread. Though I have a great Reverence for Antiquity, yet if St. *Paul* in his days pronounced an *Anathema* againſt Angels themſelves, who ſhould preach any other Goſpel, we may ſafely renounce the Authority of any Church, that ſhall contradict the expreſs Commands and Inſtitutions of Chriſt.

To conclude this Argument: Were Antiquity our only Guide and Rule in matters of Faith and Worſhip, I readily grant it would be a very uncertain Rule, and ſuch as neither the Learned, nor the Unlearned, could build their Faith on; for there have been great variety of Opinions and Practices in other Ages of the Church, eſpecially ſince the fourth Century, (from which the Church of *Rome* principally date their Antiquity) as well as in our own; which ſhews, what an uncertain Foundation the Church of *Rome* has for her Faith, as for all thoſe Doctrines and Practices wherein She differs from us, which have no foundation in Scripture, and at beſt a very uncertain one in very late Antiquity: But this does not concern us, who prefer Scripture-Antiquity before all other, and own no Antiquity in contradiction to the Scripture, which is the Rule and Foundation of our Faith; and by this we know, that we neither retain too much nor too little, becauſe we teach neither more nor leſs, than what the Scripture teaches.

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The Paper.

But 'tis Replied, The Church of England *gives leave even to Women to examine the Truth of what they teach; but certainly this is a Complement, they being incapable of Examination, neither indeed are Stateſmen, Lawyers, the Buſie, nor the ſtupidly Ignorant. For if we will be Judges our ſelves of theſe matters, what Life or Capacity is ſufficient? for in Juſtice if I examine, I ought to hear all the ſeveral Pretenders to the Interpretation of Scripture, who make it their Rule of Faith, ſo to examine thoſe Texts that make againſt us, as well as thoſe for us, and the ſeveral Expoſitors. For in Affairs of much leſs importance People are thought fooliſh and partial, let one party tell his ſtory to a ſeeming demonſtration, not to preſerve another Ear for the other ſide, before he determines, if he muſt judge at all.*

Anſwer.

The lightneſs of this Expreſſion of *Complementing*, does not ſavour of a ſerious mind in matters of ſuch vaſt importance. Did our Saviour then Complement his Hearers, when he commanded them to ſearch the Scriptures; for he had Women, and very buſie People who heard his Sermons? The Poor and the Ignorant, and the deſpiſed People, Publicans and Sinners received the Goſpel, which does not ſo much require great leiſure and capacity for ſtudy, as an honeſt teachable Mind; and I confeſs, I think it a great reproach to the Goſpel of our Saviour to make it ſo much an Art and a Myſtery, that none but great Scholars can underſtand it. Scholars indeed have made an Art, and a meer diſputing Art of it; and Hereticks, who have corrupted the Goſpel, have endeavoured by perverſe Comments to make plain places obſcure; and the Church of *Rome* has more countenanced this pretence, than any other Church in the World, to frighten

frighten People from Reading that Book, which is the moſt dangerous Book that ever was written againſt Popery. And after all their talk of the obſcurity of Scripture, their denying People the free uſe of it, is a plain Confeſſion, that they think it too plain againſt themſelves, ſo plain that every ordinary Chriſtian would be able to ſee it.

But if ſo very few People are able to judge of the Diſputes in Religion, what courſe ſhall Women and other Perſons, whom the Paper makes ſuch incompetent Judges, take? Suppoſe they have been educated in the Communion of the Church of *England*, and are now aſſaulted by Popiſh Prieſts to go over to the Church of *Rome*, muſt they make this change with reaſon, or without it? Muſt they judge for themſelves, or forſake one Church and chuſe another without Judgment? Or can Women, or Buſie, or Ignorant People more eaſily find out the true Church and the Infallible Judge, than they can read in Scripture, that they muſt worſhip none but God; that they muſt not worſhip Images and Pictures; that they muſt pray to God in a known Tongue, and celebrate the Supper of our Lord by drinking of the Cup, as well as by eating the Bread? Whoever ventures to forſake the Communion of a Church, wherein he was baptized and educated, I am ſure ought to be able to judge, whether he be or no; and thoſe who confeſs they are not able to judge, ought to keep where they are; for it is ſafer to continue in a Church without Judgment, than to forſake it without Reaſon and Judgment. In the firſt Caſe, the Providence of God in our Birth and Education will make ſome Apology for our involuntary Miſtakes; but if we wantonly leave one Church and go to another, without being able to judge of either, the Act is wholly our own choice, and if we leave a better for a worſe, we muſt take what follows; and therefore this is the moſt improper Argument in the World to be uſed by one, who is wavering between two Churches; for if he muſt not uſe his

his own private Judgment, I cannot gueſs how he ſhould either chuſe or refuſe. Thoſe who challenge a liberty of judging for themſelves, which is the undoubted right of all Reaſonable Creatures, may change as they ſee reaſon, and at their own peril if they chuſe wrong; but thoſe who diſclaim all right and capacity of judging, muſt continue as they are, and take their chance, for they may as well chuſe their Faith as their Guide, whom they will in all things believe.

But ſtill the force of the Objection is not anſwered, That he who will judge, muſt judge upon the whole matter, and therefore muſt know and be able to anſwer whatever is ſaid to the contrary; which the greateſt number of Men, as well as Women, are not able to do; but if this be true, the greateſt numbers of Men as well as Women muſt never believe there is a God, or that Chriſt came from God to declare his Will to the World; for there are very few of them that ever heard, or are able to anſwer the tenth part of the Arguments of Atheiſts and Infidels againſt the Being of a God, and the Chriſtian Religion; and yet it is ridiculous to talk of Authority, or a Judge of Controverſies in theſe matters; for we muſt firſt believe there is a God, and that Chriſt came from God, before we can believe that they have appointed a Judge of Controverſies. So that we muſt either ſay, That Common People, who have not time nor abilities to underſtand and anſwer all the Objections which are made againſt the Exiſtence of a God, can have no good reaſon to believe there is a God; or we muſt grant, that men may have ſufficient reaſon to believe ſome things, without being able to anſwer all poſſible Objections which are made againſt them.

The plain account of this matter is this: That there is ſuch a degree of Evidence, Arguments ſo plain and clear and convincing, that the Mind may ſafely acquieſce in them, without examining or anſwering all poſſible Objections which may be ſtarted. Every man finds this in himſelf, there are many things which he can never be made

made to doubt of, though it may be he has but one plain Argument to prove them: Though the Philoſopher diſputed very ſubtilly againſt the poſſibility of Motion, he could perſwade none of his Scholars that Motion was impoſſible, becauſe they ſaw themſelves and every thing elſe move every day; which was a ſufficient confutation of all the Arguments that can be brought againſt motion. If I have any one unanſwerable Argument to prove that a thing is, or that it is not, this is a ſufficient foundation for my Faith, though I cannot anſwer all Objections againſt it: For there are no Objections of any force againſt a plain and poſitive Proof, but ſuch as weaken the Proof it ſelf, and they indeed muſt be conſidered, but all other collateral difficulties may be rejected; for if I can prove that a thing is, no other difficulties about the nature, notion, or operations of ſuch a being can prove that it is not. As for inſtance: We have a great many poſitive Proofs that there is a God; eſpecially from the viſible Effects of his Power and Wiſdom in making the World; now if this be a good Argument, and nothing can be ſaid againſt it, which can move a conſidering man, then we may firmly believe there is a God, though there may be a great many difficulties objected againſt the notion of a God, what he is, and how he made the World, *&c.* which do not prove that there is no God, but that we do not perfectly comprehend him. And yet this is generally the caſe, that where there is one plain and evident Proof for or againſt any thing, there is no plain and evident Proof on the other ſide; for then indeed we ſhould be in a hard caſe, could there be plain poſitive Proofs for both ſides of the Queſtion. It will be of uſe to ſhew this more particularly, how men of very ordinary Abilities may arrive to a very great certainty in Religion, without being able to diſpute the Point, or to anſwer all poſſible Objections; and the beſt way to explain this to the meaneſt Underſtanding, is to give ſome particular Inſtances of it.

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It is a great Diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, Whether the Sacramental Bread and Wine be tranſubſtantiated into the Natural Fleſh and Blood of Chriſt, which I think a plain man, who will believe his Senſes, may determine without diſputing; for he has the beſt Evidence, that he poſſibly can have for any thing, that the conſecrated Bread and Wine is ſtill Bread and Wine, not Fleſh and Blood; for all his Senſes tell him ſo; and he who will ſuffer himſelf to be reaſoned out of his Senſes, deſerves to be deceived; and very abſurdly complains of want of Evidence and Certainty, when he rejects the moſt certain Evidence that God can give him. In matters of Senſe the Teſtimony of our Senſes is certainly the beſt Evidence, and every man, who has his Eyes in his head, can ſee whether it be Bread and Wine or not; and therefore this alone is ſufficient to create Certainty in defiance of all Objections to the contrary.

Thus the ſecond Commandment, which forbids the worſhip of all Images without any reſtriction or qualification, is a plain and expreſs proof againſt Image worſhip; for whatever Apologies may be made for the worſhip of Images, here is an expreſs Law againſt it, in ſuch plain terms, as require great Art and Sophiſtry to evade them, but no Art to underſtand them; now there being a poſitive Law againſt the worſhip of Images, and no Law either in the Old or New Teſtament to give the leaſt allowance to any kind of Image worſhip, any man, who will believe according to Evidence, muſt condemn Image worſhip, whatever other unſcriptural Arguments or Authorities may be alledged for it: And I know no need there is of any diſpute in the caſe, if men will be determined by a Divine Law.

Thus if there be a Supream Infallible Head of the Church, he muſt be appointed by Chriſt, and that in ſuch plain words, that every Body may know who he is, and what his Authority is; but Chriſt has done no ſuch thing,

and therefore there is none; and this alone is Evidence enough to ſatisfie the meaneſt man in this matter without diſputing. For if Chriſt hath appointed no Supream Infallible Judge, I am ſure all the Arguments in the World cannot make one: This is ſo plain and evident, that a man, who will be convinc'd by Reaſon, cannot reſiſt it; for though no pretence of uſefulneſs or neceſſity can prove that there is ſuch a Judge, yet that Chriſt has appointed no ſuch Judge, evidently proves that there is none; for he cannot be unleſs he is evidently appointed by Chriſt; and yet he is not evidently appointed, unleſs it be in ſuch plain words, as admit of no reaſonable diſpute. So that this whole Controverſie about the Supream Head of the Church, and an Infallible Judge, iſſues in this one Point, Whether Chriſt hath appointed ſuch a Head and Judge? and there is but one way to prove it, *viz.* by ſhewing where and when Chriſt has done this; and this the meaneſt man without diſputing may judge of; for if no ſuch thing plainly appear, the want of Evidence for it is all the Evidence we need to have againſt it.

And thus it is in moſt of the Diſputes between us and the Church of *Rome*, eſpecially where the People are moſt concerned, they are reduced to this one plain Queſtion, Whether any ſuch thing was inſtituted by Chriſt? becauſe without ſuch an inſtitution they can have no vertue in them; and whether they be inſtituted or not, the moſt unlearned man, who can read the Bible, at leaſt with the help of a Guide, may ſatisfie himſelf. As for inſtance, Whether the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be a Propitiatory Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead? whether the Laity are not as much bound to drink of the Sacramental Cup as to eat of the Bread? whether it be lawful to pray to Saints departed, and to make them our Advocates and Interceſſors with God? whether we muſt pray to God in a Language which we do, or do not underſtand, &c. I ſay nothing can juſtifie theſe things, but an inſtitution; and when no ſuch inſtitution appears,

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it is a vain thing to attempt any other way to prove the lawfulneſs or uſefulneſs of them; eſpecially, if beſides the want of ſuch a poſitive inſtitution, we have plain evidence againſt them, and ſuch as every man may underſtand. When the Scripture tells us, That *Chriſt has by one Offering perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*, Hebr. 9. 25, 26. & 10. 14 this is a direct proof againſt the Sacrifice of the Maſs, wherein he is offered ten thouſand times every day. When Chriſt is the Prieſt as well as the Sacrifice, and can be offered by none but himſelf, how comes he to be offered by a Maſs-Prieſt, unleſs he as well as the Bread and Wine, be tranſubſtantiated into Chriſt? It is certain, there can be no ſuch thing as the Popiſh Sacrifice of the Maſs, unleſs the Bread and Wine be tranſubſtantiated into the Body and Blood of Chriſt, and we are as certain as our Senſes can make us, that there is no Tranſubſtantiation.

As for the half-Communion, it is confeſſed that Chriſt did inſtitute his laſt Supper in both kinds, and commanded them all to drink of the Cup: And this may ſatisfie any man, who does not believe that the Church of *Rome* has authority to repeal the Inſtitutions of Chriſt, and to forbid what he commanded.

And when St. *Paul* aſſures us, That *there is but one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*, one would think this Evidence enough againſt the Mediation of Saints and Angels, when they cannot ſhew one word for it. For as for their diſtinction between Mediators of Redemption and pure Interceſſion, they cannot ſhew it in Scripture, where our Redeemer is our only Advocate: And when Chriſt himſelf enforces and ratifies that Command of the Law, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve*; this is a plain Argument againſt the Invocation of Saints, ſince they have nothing for it. And when there is no Authority in Scripture for praying in an unknown Tongue, one would think that the abſurdity of the Practice, and the Authority of St. *Paul*,

who expreſly condems it, were Evidence enough againſt it.

So that though men may be at the needleſs expence of a great deal of Learning in theſe Controverſies, yet in truth there is no Learning required to underſtand them, the meaneſt man may judge for himſelf; for the Controverſie turns upon ſo plain a Point, and there is ſo plain Evidence in the Caſe, that an honeſt man may have abundant evidence and ſatisfaction, though he do not underſtand one word of all the Learning which is loſt in ſuch Diſputes.

The Paper.

In ſhort, I think there is but Evidence or Authority to move us to believe.

Anſwer.

This is certainly true, if it be rightly underſtood; that is, if by Evidence is meant the Evidence of Senſe and Reaſon, and by Authority, the Authority of Scripture, which is the Authority of God, who ſpake by *Moſes* and the Prophets in the Old Teſtament, and by Chriſt and his Apoſtles in the New, and the Authority of the Primitive Church, as credible Witneſſes of the Apoſtolick Doctrine and Practice; in this ſenſe we grant that our Faith muſt be founded both upon Evidence and Authority, and this is the true Proteſtant Reſolution of Faith; and then the only fault of this Propoſition is, That Evidence and Authority are oppoſed to each other, whereas they muſt always go together in a true Rational Faith. But if by Evidence be meant all the Arguments whereby we can prove the truth of any thing, whether from Senſe or Reaſon, or Scripture, or the Teſtimony of Antiquity, and by Authority be meant the Authority of a viſible Judge of Controverſies, as it is underſtood in this Paper, then at

at beſt this is a very precarious Propoſition, without the leaſt ſhadow of truth, that either Evidence or Authority muſt move us to believe; that is, that our Faith muſt be reſolved either into Evidence, or the Authority of a viſible Judge. For how is this proved, That when there wants Evidence for our Faith, we muſt believe upon the Authority of a viſible Judge? It ſeems to me a more natural Conſequence, That where there wants Evidence, we muſt not believe at all. If it had been firſt proved, that God had appointed a viſible Judge to direct thoſe who cannot judge for themſelves, there had been ſome pretence for ſaying, that we muſt believe either upon Evidence, or upon the Authority of a Judge; but without proving this firſt, I would deſire any man to prove to me, that I am bound to believe what I have no Evidence for, or which is all one, no ſuch Evidence, as I can underſtand; and if I be not bound to believe without Evidence, how can the want of Evidence prove that there muſt be a viſible Judge, into whoſe Authority I muſt reſolve my Faith?

The Paper.

Evidence to the generality of People is impoſſible.

Anſwer.

But I have already proved that this is not impoſſible, but the meaneſt man, with the help of a learned and faithful Guide, may underſtand the Scriptures in all things neceſſary for a Chriſtian to know. But ſuppoſe at preſent, that the generality of People cannot do this, yet can learned men do it? And one would think, if there be any Evidence, at leaſt learned men may underſtand it; for that which is not evident, neither to the learned nor to the unlearned, I fear is no Evidence at all; unleſs there be ſuch a kind of Evidence, as is evident to nobody;

body; and yet the Church of *Rome* has brought things to a fine paſs, if ſhe muſt be forced to deny, that we have any Evidence for our Religion.

Now if there be any Evidence for our Religion, and learned men may underſtand it, then at leaſt learned men may judge for themſelves, and not depend upon the Authority of any other Judge; and thus there is no need, nay there can be no uſe of a viſible Judge for the learned part of the World; for to ſay that learned men have Evidence to ground their Faith on, and yet muſt not believe according to Evidence, but Authority, is to ſay, that men have eyes, but muſt not uſe them to ſee their own way, but muſt follow a Guide blindfold. And yet if learned men be allowed to ſee, and judge for themſelves, a Judge of Controverſies will ſignifie very little; for it is learned men who ſtart Difficulties and manage Diſputes, and are the Authors and Patrons of Hereſies; and if theſe learned men, who may and muſt judge for themſelves, differ from each other, and from the Judge of Controverſies, what remedy is there? Nay, if learned men muſt judge for themſelves according to the Evidence they have of things, and not be over-ruled by Authority without Evidence, there can be no viſible Judge of Controverſies; for an Authority, which may be contradicted (as it may be, if learned men muſt judge for themſelves) can be no Authority either with the learned or unlearned; for the unlearned will have no great Reverence for that Authority which the learned may contradict. And therefore whoever will have a Judge of Controverſies, muſt not lay the neceſſity of having ſuch a Judge meerly upon the ignorance of the Multitude, for this does not prove that learned men muſt have ſuch a Judge; nay, it proves that learned men need no ſuch Judge, if Ignorance only make him neceſſary; and if there be not a Judge for learned men, there can be no Judge of Controverſies; for there are more Diſputes among the learned than the ignorant. The ignorance

norance of the People is only made a pretence to deceive ignorant People, but is no good Reaſon for a viſible Judge; for there can be no viſible Judge, unleſs he judge for the learned, as well as the unlearned; and if learned men muſt not judge for themſelves, it is then a ridiculous thing to talk of any other Evidence than the Authority of the Judge; for what does Evidence ſignifie if no man muſt uſe it? Nay, upon theſe Principles it is a ridiculous thing to diſtinguiſh between learned and unlearned men in Matters of Religion. To what purpoſe is it to read and ſtudy the Scriptures, Fathers, and Councils, when they muſt not exerciſe their own Reaſon or Judgment about them? What priviledge have the learned above the unlearned, when they muſt know, and believe no more than their Judge will let them?

The Paper.

And we are diſcouraged from the quiet way of Submiſſion to the Clergies Authority, by your telling us, That no Aſſembly of men have power on Earth to bind the Conſcience.

Anſwer.

How comes Submiſſion to the Clergies Authority in here? For is every Prieſt the Judge into whoſe Authority we muſt reſolve our Faith? This indeed is the laſt Reſolution of Faith in the Church of *Rome*, for the Prieſt is the immediate Guide of every mans Faith and Conſcience; and after all the talk of a viſible Judge, the People know nothing more what he teaches, than what their Prieſt tells them, who it may be himſelf knows little of the matter. And I cannot ſee what greater ſecurity this gives the People of the *Roman* Communion, than what our People have, who have generally as

as wiſe and learned and honeſt Guides as they, to ſay nothing more.

But who ever ſaid, *That no Aſſembly of men have power on Earth to bind the Conſcience?* We do acknowledge that the Church has power to make Laws to bind the Conſcience; for whatever Laws ſhe makes for the edification and good government of Chriſtian People, which contradict no Law of God, and are agreeable to the general Rules of the Goſpel, do bind the Conſcience. Nay, in Matters of Faith, the Authority of the Church is ſo ſacred, that all Chriſtians are bound in Conſcience quietly to ſubmit to her Deciſions, where there is not plain Evidence againſt them: But we ſay indeed, That no Man, nor Aſſembly of Men, have ſuch Authority as to oblige us to believe all their Dictates and Decrees without examination, much leſs contrary to the evidence of Senſe, Reaſon, and Scripture, and the Judgment and Practice of the firſt Ages of the Church, and therefore we do not require that men ſhould believe meerly upon the Authority of their Teachers, without underſtanding why they do ſo. But this I hope is no diſcouragement to any men to ſubmit to the Inſtructions of their Guides, and to learn from them what they are to believe, and why; and this will make them wiſer men, and more underſtanding Chriſtians, than to rely wholly on their Authority.

The Paper.

For Authority, that of the Church of Rome *is infinitely greater, who, it is to be feared, at leaſt has an appearance of Succeſſion and Viſibility, and who pretends, that God has left in that Church ſuch means, ſo happy and ſo eaſie to attain to the certainty of the Truth, that our very Divines wiſh, in this confuſion of things, God had ſo ordered it for certainty and union.*

An-

Anſwer.

This is a ſtrange Paragraph, that only a fear of an appearance of Succeſſion and Viſibility, and her own pretence that God has made her the viſible Judge of Controverſies, ſhould render the Authority of the Church of *Rome* infinitely greater than of any other Church, which are very little things to give ſo great an Authority.

But we will readily grant, that the Church of *Rome* has been a viſible Church in a conſtant ſucceſſion of Biſhops and Paſtors, from the Apoſtles days till now; What then? how does this give her a greater Authority than other Churches, which have as viſible a ſucceſſion as ſhe? The Greek Church has been a viſible Church, and preſerved her ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles till now; the Church of *England* is as viſible, and has as good a ſucceſſion as the Church of *Rome*; how then does Succeſſion and Viſibility give the Church of *Rome* a greater Authority than the Greek Church, or the Church of *England*?

It is a mighty weak Foundation for the Authority of a Judge of Controverſies (which is the matter in queſtion) that ſuch a Church has a viſible Succeſſion from the Apoſtles. A Judge of Controverſies, who ſhall oblige all men to believe his determinations, muſt be infallible; unleſs we will ſay, that God has obliged us, without examination, to believe a Judge who may err, which cannot be, unleſs we can ſuppoſe that God may oblige us to believe a lye, for thus it may happen, if we are always obliged to believe a Judge, who may ſometimes err, as all fallible Creatures may: Which ſhews, what a poor ſhift it is which ſome late Writers have uſed, (and which this Paper, which ſpeaks not one word of Infallibility, ſeems to imitate) to ſet aſide the Diſpute about the Infallibility of the Church, which they can make nothing of, and to inſiſt only on the Authority of the Church to determine Con-

troverſies, as a viſible Judge; for that only obliges men either to renounce the Communion of ſuch a Church, or to ſubmit to her Determinations, not at all adventures to believe as the Church believes, as I ſhewed before; and therefore this does not concern the Diſpute about the Reſolution of Faith.

Now if the Judge of Controverſies muſt be infallible, how does a viſible Succeſſion from the Apoſtles prove any Church to be infallible? This is no natural effect, as the Romaniſts themſelves grant; for then the Succeſſors in all the Apoſtolical Chairs muſt be infallible, ſince all the Apoſtles were as infallible as St. *Peter*; whereas they will allow this only to the Chair of St. *Peter*, as a peculiar Prerogative granted to him by Chriſt; ſo that it it is not Succeſſion or Viſibility which proves the Church of *Rome* to be the infallible Judge of Controverſies, which is the thing this Paper inſiſts on, but they muſt return to the good old Arguments of *Tu es Petrus*, & *paſce Oves*, which I perceive the Author of this Paper was aſhamed of; and therefore I ſhall not take a needleſs trouble to confute them.

If indeed they could prove a viſible Succeſſion of Doctrine and Worſhip, as well as Biſhops, from the Apoſtles, that they believed and practiſed neither more nor leſs through all the ſeveral Ages of the Church to this day, than what St. *Peter* taught them, though this would not make them the Judge of Controverſies, yet they would be good Witneſſes of the Apoſtolical Faith, and there would be great reaſon to enquire, what their Faith and Worſhip is: But their meer Succeſſion to the Apoſtles does not prove that they have neither diminiſhed nor added to the Faith of the Apoſtles; for there is no natural neceſſity that thoſe who ſucceed ſhould always be of the mind of their Predeceſſors; and we have plain Evidence, that the Church of *Rome* has in ſeveral Ages made new and ſtrange additions to the Chriſtian Faith, and their Succeſſion of Biſhops without

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a Succeſſion of Faith and Worſhip, is little worth.

And yet it is much ſtranger ſtill, that the Church of *Romes* pretence to the Authority of a Judge, ſhould be made a Reaſon to believe that ſhe has this Authority. What advantage has Confidence above Modeſty over weak Minds! The Church of *England* might pretend this with as much reaſon as the Church of *Rome*, but ſhe diſowning Infallibility loſes all claim to it, and the Church of *Rome* pretending to Infallibility, it ſeems, gains a right to it by Poſſeſſion and Uſurpation.

But the Argument, ſuch as it is, ſeems to be this, That the Divines of the Church of *England* wiſh in this confuſion of things, that there were a Judge of Controverſies, and therefore by their own Confeſſion, a Judge is very uſeful and neceſſary, and therefore there is ſuch a Judge, and no other Church pretending to that Authority but the Church of *Rome*, therefore ſhe alone is that Judge: Which is ſuch a Chain of Conſequences, as hang together by Magick, for they have no natural Connexion. If we did think a Judge of Controverſies uſeful, does it hence follow that God has appointed ſuch a Judge, when there is no appearance of any ſuch thing? Or if God had appointed ſuch a Judge, does the Church of *Romes* pretending to be that Judge, when ſhe can ſhew no Commiſſion for it, prove that ſhe is ſo?

But the truth is, whatever Divines they be (if there be any ſuch) who wiſh for ſuch a Judge to unite the whole Chriſtian Church in Faith and Worſhip, take very wrong Meaſures of things. And becauſe the true underſtanding of this is the moſt effectual way to end this Controverſie, I ſhall diſcourſe particularly of it.

1. Firſt then I obſerve, That an Infallible Judge of Controverſies, whom we are bound in all caſes to believe, is inconſiſtent with the conſtitution of human Nature. Man is a Reaſonable Creature, and it is natural to

a Reaſonable Creature to underſtand and judge for himſelf, and therefore to ſubmit to any mans Judgment, how infallible ſoever he be preſumed to be, without underſtanding and judging for our ſelves, is an unnatural impoſition upon Mankind; this deſtroys human Nature, and transforms a Man, who is a knowing and intelligent Creature, into a ſenſleſs, though infallible Machin, which moves by external direction, not from an inward Principle of Knowledge and Life. To know, and to follow a Guide without any Knowledge or Judgment of our own, are two very different things, the firſt is the Underſtanding of a man, the other a ſort of Knowledge without Underſtanding. For though I had an entire Syſtem of true Propoſitions, which I muſt exerciſe no act of Reaſon and Judgment about, but only receive them as the Dictates of an infallible Judge; this is not human Knowledge, this is no perfection of human Underſtanding; no man is a jot the wiſer or more knowing for all this, no more than he would be who could repeat all the Propoſitions in *Euclid*, and believe them to be all true upon the Authority of his Maſter, but knows not how to demonſtrate any one of them, which is to underſtand nothing about them. Now I can never believe, that God will deſtroy human Nature, by ſuſpending all the acts of Reaſon and Judgment, to make men infallible; which is a certain way indeed to prevent Error, to let men know and judge of nothing, that they may not miſtake; but for my part I value Knowledge ſo much, that I had rather venture ſome Miſtakes, than forfeit my Underſtanding. If my Faith muſt be reſolved wholly into the Authority of an infallible Judge, though I may think I underſtand ſome things, yet I muſt not believe for that Reaſon, for then I muſt believe nothing but what I do underſtand, and ſee a Reaſon for, which makes every man his own Judge; but I muſt believe my Judge with, or without Underſtanding, without the exerciſe of my own Reaſon and Judgment, which may

may make us good Catholicks, but does alſo unman us.

But you'l ſay, Are we not bound to believe Infallible Teachers, whom we know to be Infallible? And has not God in ſeveral Ages given ſuch Teachers to the World, *Moſes* and the Prophets, Chriſt and his Apoſtles? And muſt we not reſign up our Underſtandings to them? and does this unman us? Why then may we not reſign up our Underſtandings to an Infallible Judge now, as we ought to have done had we lived in the days of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and any other Infallible Teachers? Now for Anſwer to this conſider,

Secondly, That no Infallible Teacher can wholly ſuperſede the exerciſe of our own Reaſon and Judgment. For though the immediate Authority of God muſt and ought in all caſes to over-rule us, and is the beſt and moſt rational account of our Faith, for nothing is more reaſonable than to believe God, who is Eternal Truth; yet when any man pretends to teach by Gods Authority, we muſt in the firſt place judge of his Authority, and not believe every one, who pretends to come from God, which reſolves the very Reaſon of our Faith into our own private Judgment, and therefore by this Rule we muſt at leaſt uſe our own Judgment in the choice of our Judge, which in our preſent caſe will infer the uſe of our own Reaſon and Judgment as to all the material Diſputes in Religion, and make ſuch a Judge needleſs, when we have found him: Of which more preſently.

Nay, Secondly, We muſt judge of the Doctrine of ſuch a Teacher by Senſe and Reaſon, which are the natural Principles of Knowledge; for let a man pretend never ſo much to a Divine Authority, if he preach any thing contrary to the Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind, we are not to believe him, no not though he ſhould work Miracles. For we muſt believe nothing comes from God which is contrary to Senſe and Reaſon, which are the natural Notices God has given us of things; and as God

cannot

annot contradict himſelf, ſo we can never be ſurer that any man ſpeaks from God, than we are of what Senſe and Reaſon teaches; and if the Church of *Rome* would but ſuffer us to judge thus far, we ſhould have an infallible demonſtration againſt her Infallibility. However this ſhews, That the moſt infallible Teacher cannot deſtroy our natural liberty of judging, for we muſt judge of his Doctrine by Senſe and Reaſon, and ſee that it contradict neither, which are the only natural Principles of Knowledge we have; which is therefore to exerciſe all the Reaſon and Judgment which God has given us.

And, Thirdly, Though we muſt receive all Divine and Supernatural Truths upon the Authority of the Revealer, yet we muſt uſe our own Reaſon and Judgment to underſtand the Revelation; which cannot poſſibly be otherwiſe. For whoever it be that ſpeaks to us, whether God by an immediate Voice from Heaven, or a Prophet inſpired by God, we have no way to underſtand what is ſaid, but by our own natural Faculties, and therefore muſt judge of the ſenſe of what is ſaid; juſt as we do at other times when any man ſpeaks to us. And if we were not preſent to hear the Prophet ſpeak, but have his Revelations delivered to us in writing, we muſt take the ſame courſe to underſtand ſuch a Divine Book, as we do any other human Writing; if there be any difficulty in it, we muſt ſeek for ſome body to help us to underſtand it, but ſtill we muſt underſtand for our ſelves, for no body elſe can underſtand for us, and if we muſt underſtand, we muſt judge for our ſelves too. This is all that we demand or deſire, a liberty to underſtand and judge what God would have us believe and do; and this the moſt infallible Teacher cannot deprive us of no more than he can oblige us to ſee and hear with other mens Eyes and Ears, when God has given us Eyes and Ears of our own.

And Fourthly, Where there is a ſtanding Revelation, we muſt then judge of the Doctrine of all ſucceeding Prophets, how infallible ſoever they be, by its conformity

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to the preceding Revelation. We muſt never ſuppoſe, that God can contradict himſelf, and therefore though he may improve a former Revelation by new and more perfect diſcoveries, yet he can never contradict it; and hence it follows, That no true Prophet can contradict a true Revelation; but though a power of Miracles may give Authority to a new Prophet to expound a former Revelation, and to improve it, yet we muſt be well ſatisfied, that the Doctrine of this new Prophet be agreeable to the old Revelation; which makes us Judges of the ſenſe both of the old and the new Revelation: For it is impoſſible we can underſtand their agreement, unleſs we can judge of the ſenſe of both.

This was the Caſe of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, when they appeared in the World. The Law of *Moſes*, and the Writings of the Prophets were the ſtanding Revelation, which God had given to the Jewiſh Nation, whereby they were to try all Prophets. To the Law and to the Teſtimony, if they ſpeak not according to this Word, it is becauſe there is no light in them, *Iſaiah* 8. 20. and therefore though Chriſt wrought more and greater Miracles than ever *Moſes* did, this alone had not been a ſufficient Reaſon to believe him, had not his Perſon anſwered the Types and Predictions of the Law, and his Doctrine been not the deſtruction, but the improvement and perfection of the *Moſaical* Diſpenſation. To this trial he ſubmitted himſelf and his Doctrine, appeals to *Moſes* and the Prophets, requires them to *ſearch the Scriptures, for they are they which teſtifie of me, John* 5. 39. and after his Reſurrection from the Dead, which one would have thought had been ſufficient of it ſelf to have confirmed his Divine Authority, yet he proves from Scripture, that *thus Chriſt ought to ſuffer, and to enter into his Glory, and beginning at Moſes and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them* (the two Diſciples going to *Emaus*) *the things concerning himſelf, Luke* 24. 26, 27. And this courſe the Apoſtles took in their Sermons. St. *Peter* did not only teſtifie

teſtifie to the *Jews*, as an Eye-witneſs, that *Chriſt was riſen from the dead*, but proves, that *David* himſelf had propheſied of this, *Acts* 2. 22, &c. Thus St. *Paul* diſputed with the *Jews* at *Rome*, to whom he expounded and teſtified the Kingdom of God, *perſwading them concerning Jeſus, both out of the Law of Moſes, and out of the Prophets from morning till evening*, *Acts* 28. 23. Thus his Epiſtle to the *Romans* is one entire Diſpute about the obligation of the Law, and Juſtification by Faith in Chriſt, from the Types and Predictions of the Law it ſelf. So that Chriſt and his Apoſtles were certainly as infallible Teachers, as ever were in the World, yet they did not bear men down meerly by their infallible Authority, but appealed to the Scriptures, and to every mans own Judgment of them, and God had ordered it ſo, that it could not be otherwiſe; for he had given them a ſtanding Revelation, whereby they were to judge of all new Prophets, whatever they were; but if they muſt have relied on the bare word of ſuch Prophets, whom they were to try by this Revelation, for the Senſe and Interpretation of it, this had been the ſame thing as to take their own word without any trial.

Now if Chriſt himſelf never pretended to any ſuch Authority, that all men ſhould believe him upon his own word, without examining his Doctrine by the Scriptures, or exerciſing their own Reaſon and Judgment, can we think, that he ſhould give any ſuch Authority to St. *Peter*? Nay, when it is evident, that St. *Peter* never had any ſuch Authority, and never could exerciſe it, how can St. *Peters* Succeſſors have that in his right, which he never had nor could have himſelf? For though he was an infallible Teacher, yet every man had a liberty to examine what he taught, and to judge of it by its conformity to the Law and the Prophets.

But you'l ſay, Could not Chriſt appoint an infallible Judge of Controverſies in his Church to decide all Diſputes, and to prevent Hereſies and Schiſms? That Chriſt has

has not done this, I ſhall take for granted, till I ſee ſome better Proofs of it than I have yet met with; and I have ſome reaſon to think ſuch a Judge could not be appointed, whom we ſhould be obliged to rely on with an implicit Faith without examination, or any uſe of our own Reaſon and Judgment; and that is, becauſe it was impracticable to appoint a Judge, upon whoſe bare Authority we are bound to believe the truth of Chriſtianity it ſelf: Chriſt and his Apoſtles did not aſſume to themſelves to be ſuch Judges in their days, for there lay an Appeal from them to *Moſes* and the Prophets, as you have already heard, and ſo there does to this day; and if I muſt not take any mans word for the truth of the Chriſtian Religion, I muſt not take his word neither for the truth of any Doctrine in Chriſtianity. If I may to this day examine the Goſpel by the Law and the Prophets, as the *Jews* did in our Saviours days, then I muſt judge for my ſelf too as they did, and not believe any pretence of Infallibility againſt my own Senſe and Reaſon. I cannot compare the Doctrine of the Law and the Goſpel, unleſs I underſtand them both, and I can underſtand and judge only with my own Underſtanding; and if I muſt have done thus, though I had lived in our Saviours days, ſurely I muſt do ſo now, whatever infallible Teachers there may be in the World; which I think is a demonſtration, that there neither is nor can be any ſuch infallible Judge, whom I am bound to believe purely upon his own Authority.

But it may be Objected, That this proves too much, and undermines even the Proteſtant reſolution of Faith into the Authority of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and the Writings of the New Teſtament as an infallible Rule of Chriſtian Faith and Manners. For it ſeems, though we pretend to own their Infallibility, yet we muſt examine their Doctrine by the Law, and not believe them to be infallible, till we have ſet in Judgment on their Doctrine, and

approved it as agreeable to a more infallible Rule; and thus we believe their Infallibility, becauſe we like their Doctrine; not believe their Doctrine, becauſe they are infallible.

Now there is ſo much Truth in this Objection, that I cannot believe that Chriſt and his Apoſtles are Teachers come from God, unleſs I be ſatisfied that they teach nothing contrary to any former Revelation, which God has made of his Will; for God cannot contradict himſelf, and therefore whoever contradicts what God has before taught, can be no true Prophet. And therefore though Miracles alone were ſufficient to give Authority to *Moſes*, who was the firſt Prophet, by whom God made a publick Revelation of his Will, yet Miracles alone were not ſufficient to give Authority to any ſucceeding Prophets, but their Doctrine alſo muſt be examined by its conformity to the Law; for though Miracles gave them Authority to make new Revelations, yet not to contradict the old. So that to examine the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles by the Law, ſo far as to ſee that they do not contradict it, is no more than to examine, whether they be true Prophets or not, as all men ought to do before they believe any pretenders to Prophecy; but when it appears that they do not contradict the Law, then that power of working Miracles, wherewith they are endowed, obliges us to believe them in every thing elſe upon their own Authority. And thus we own Chriſt and his Apoſtles to be infallible Teachers, (and conſequently receive the Writings of the New Teſtament as an infallible Rule of Chriſtian Faith) becauſe they were men endowed with ſupernatural Powers, and did not in their Preaching contradict any former Revelation of Gods Will. And this is all that we do, or need affirm, to deſtroy the Pretences of an infallible Judge; for if I muſt ſtill judge for my ſelf, whether the Doctrine of the Goſpel do not contradict the Law, then I muſt judge for my ſelf, both

both of the ſenſe of the Law and the Goſpel, or elſe I cannot judge, whether they agree or diſagree; and therefore there can be no Infallible Judge, to whom I muſt ſubmit my own Reaſon and Judgment in this Inquiry, for that were to own their Infallibility, before I know whether they are infallible or not.

Though I muſt believe whatever an infallible Judge teaches, yet I muſt not believe him till I know him to be infallible; and I ſhould think no pretender to Infallibility ſhould exempt himſelf from ſuch a trial, as all Prophets after *Moſes*, even Chriſt and his Apoſtles themſelves ſubmitted to; that is, to have their Doctrine tried by a ſtanding Revelation. Now ſuppoſe the Pope, or Church of *Rome* to ſet up for this infallible Judicature; before I can own their Infallibility, I muſt at leaſt examine, whether what they teach do not contradict the Law and the Prophets, for thus I may and muſt examine the Goſpel it ſelf, and if in any one thing they plainly and directly contradict the Law, I have nothing more to do with their Infallibility; for no man can be infallible, who miſtakes in any one thing.

The Church of *Rome* then teaches, That *we may give Religious Worſhip to Saints and Angels, and Images.* Having the Law of *Moſes* in my hand; I turn to it, and according to the beſt of my Underſtanding I find this Worſhip expreſly forbid in the firſt and ſecond Commandments. *No,* ſay they, *this is your miſtake, we are the Infallible Judges, and you muſt not truſt your own underſtanding, but take the ſenſe of the Church in it.* By your favour Gentleman, ſay I, you are a little too haſty with your Infallibility; when I am ſatisfied you are infallible, I will truſt you, but I am now inquiring whether you are infallible or not, and therefore as yet we are upon even ground, and I muſt truſt my own Judgment till I find one more infallible. Now, I ſay, you contradict the firſt and ſecond Commandments, and therefore are

not infallible, and you would prove, that you do not contradict theſe Commandments from your pretended Infallibility, which is the thing yet in queſtion. Chriſt and his Apoſtles permitted men to judge for themſelves, whether they contradicted the Law and the Prophets, and therefore ſuffered them to judge of the Senſe of the Law too; and ſo muſt you do alſo, unleſs you pretend an exemption from all Trial and Examination, which Chriſt and his Apoſtles never pretended to. This ſhews, that even to this day no pretence of Infallibility can exempt men from having their Doctrine tried by the Law and the Prophets; for the Goſpel it ſelf may ſtill be thus tried, and therefore there can be no ſuch Infallible Judge as has any Authority to oblige us to believe any Senſe they put upon the Law contrary to our own Senſe and Reaſon; for then ſuch a Judge as this could not be tried by the Law: For if he alone has Authority to interpret the Law, no body can try him but himſelf. And this plain Inſtance I have given of their contradicting the firſt and ſecond Commandments, utterly overthrows their Infallibility, till they can prove, not by their pretended Infallibility, but by plain Reaſon and Argument, that they do not contradict them. And we deſire no more than to ſet aſide their Plea of *Infallibility*, and we will reaſon the Caſe with them when they pleaſe.

And beſides this, by a parity of Reaſon this Argument reaches much farther: For if the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles muſt be tried by the Law and the Prophets, becauſe no man can have any Authority againſt a ſtanding Revelation; then by the ſame Reaſon, whoever ſhould now ſet up for an infallible Guide, his Doctrines muſt be examined by the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, which is now an infallible Rule to us. And if the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles might be examined by the Law and the Prophets, for the very ſame Reaſon the Doctrine of all ſucceeding Biſhops muſt be tried by the Writings of

of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles; for they are as much a ſtanding Revelation to the Chriſtian Church, as the Law and the Prophets were to the *Jews*. Nay indeed, there is more reaſon now to examine the Doctrine of all Teachers by the Writings of the New Teſtament, than there was under the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation to examine them by the Old; becauſe the New Teſtament is the laſt and moſt perfect Revelation of God's Will, and we muſt expect and receive no more; for St. *Paul* pronounces an *Anathema* againſt *Angels* themſelves, ſhould *they preach any other Goſpel*, *Gal.* 1.8, 9. whereas the Law it ſelf gave expectations of a more excellent Prophet than *Moſes*, and of a more perfect Revelation; and therefore as they were to receive no Prophet who contradicted the Law of *Moſes*, ſo we muſt receive none who Preach any thing elſe, than what Chriſt and his Apoſtles have taught. Now if the New Teſtament be all that, and more than that to us, which the Old Teſtament was to the *Jews*, then we muſt have the ſame liberty of judging under the New Teſtament, which the *Jews* had under the Old: For there can be no more danger in our judging of the Senſe of the Goſpel, and examining the Doctrines of all men by it, than there was in allowing this liberty to the *Jews*, we have the ſame natural right to it which the *Jews* had; a Right, not owing to a poſitive Inſtitution, but to the reaſon and neceſſity of the thing.

But to ſet aſide this Diſpute about the poſſibility of ſuch an Infallible Judge of Controverſies, this very Conſideration proves, that Chriſt never intended it; *viz.* That he has given us the Goſpel in Writing as a ſtanding Rule of Faith and Manners, and has appointed an Order of Men to ſtudy the Scripture themſelves, and to inſtruct others in the true Senſe and Interpretation of it.

1. Becauſe he has given us the Goſpel in Writing, which is now to us a ſtanding Rule of Faith and Worſhip, as the Law and the Prophets was to the *Jews*. Now the

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uſe of a written Law is for every body to underſtand it, and direct their Faith and Manners by it. This was the uſe the *Jews* were required to make of the Old Teſtament, and certainly the New Teſtament was writ for the ſame end, or elſe I know not why it was writ: If then we muſt learn from the Scriptures what we are to believe and practice, this inevitably proves that our Saviours intention was, that we ſhould judge for our ſelves; for no man can learn any thing from a Writing, unleſs he be allowed to underſtand it, and judge of the ſenſe and meaning of it: Now is not this a plain Proof, that Chriſt never intended ſuch a Judge of Controverſies, whom we muſt believe with an implicite Faith? If I muſt receive my Faith upon the Authority of a Judge, then there is no need of a Rule which I muſt, and can make no uſe of; if I muſt follow my Rule, there is no room left for a Judge, for I muſt judge for my ſelf: To reſolve my Faith into the Authority of a Rule and of a Judge, are as inconſiſtent as judging and not judging, and therefore Chriſt could not appoint both ways, becauſe they contradict each other; one requires the exerciſe of my own Reaſon and Judgment, and the other forbids it; and therefore ſince Chriſt has given us a written Rule, we may reaſonably conclude he has appointed no Judge. For though a Law, and a Judge to execute that Law, are very conſiſtent in Civil Government, where the Sentence of a Judge does not oblige mens Faith, but only authoritatively determine a difference, yet they are two very contrary, and therefore inconſiſtent Reſolutions of Faith.

Secondly, As Chriſt has given us a Rule, ſo he has appointed an order of men to ſtudy this Rule themſelves, and to inſtruct other Chriſtians in the meaning of it, which is an Argument he intended we ſhould underſtand it. For why ſhould we be taught the Scripture, but that we may underſtand it; and to what end ſhould

we

we underſtand it, but to make it our Rule? To teach and inſtruct, and to determine as a Judge, are two very different things; the firſt reſerves to us a liberty of judging; the ſecond determines us to believe the Dictates of our Judge. Now what need of both theſe? If Chriſt hath appointed a Judge, whom we muſt in all things believe, what need of Teachers to inſtruct men in the Knowledge of the Scriptures? If the Scriptures have no ſenſe, but what the Judge gives them, what an impertinent trouble is it to ſtudy the Scriptures? Who can interpret them but this infallible Judge? And how then can there be ſo many Teachers, if there be but one Judge? Or if the Scriptures may be underſtood, and may be taught, what uſe is there of a Judge, unleſs it be to unteach what he has not a mind to? and then he may make all other Teachers uſeleſs when he pleaſes. Nay, if the greateſt Apoſtles were no more than Teachers, where is the Judge? and yet this is the only Commiſſion Chriſt gave to all the Apoſtles, and to *Peter* among the reſt, to teach thoſe things which he had commanded them. The Charge Chriſt gives to *Peter* is, *to feed his Sheep, and his Lambs*, which is the ſame St. *Paul* lays on the Elders of *Epheſus*, *Take heed unto your ſelves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you Overſeers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchaſed with his own Blood*, Acts 20. 28. that is, to inſtruct and teach them; which is the reaſon St. *Paul* aſſigns for thoſe different orders of men in the Church. *He gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt, till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*, Epheſ. 4. 11, 12, 13. Here is no Judge of Controverſies mentioned among all theſe, though he had been worth them all,

all, and indeed had made all the other uſeleſs, if there had been any ſuch Office. But that which I obſerve is, That the work of an Apoſtle was to inſtruct men in the Faith, to teach them Knowledge and Underſtanding, what they are to believe, and why; which is very inconſiſtent with the Office of a Judge. For he who inſtructs men, helps them to underſtand and judge for themſelves; but a Judge only impoſes upon the Faith and Underſtanding of men without any liberty of judging. If we muſt not underſtand our Religion, nor uſe our Underſtanding in judging between Truth and Error, there can be no uſe for Teachers, and therefore that Chriſt has appointed men to inſtruct his Church, is a proof that he intended they ſhould believe with their Underſtandings; and if all the Apoſtles, even St. *Peter* himſelf had no other Commiſſion but to Teach, then their Authority could not extend farther than their Teaching; that is, they could not oblige men to believe more than they could make them underſtand the reaſon of.

Well, but if Chriſt have not appointed a Judge of Controverſies, what certainty can we have of our Religion? and what care has Chriſt taken of the Unity of the Church? Theſe are two Points which muſt be conſidered, and if we can give a fair account of them without a Judge of Controverſies, there will be ſo little need of ſuch a Judge, that there will be no great Reaſon to contend about him.

Firſt, As for certainty; why cannot we be certain of our Religion, as well as of other Matters, without an infallible Judge? Does any man want an infallible Judge to make him certain of the ſenſe of a plain Law, or any other intelligible Writing? to underſtand the difference between true and falſe reaſoning? to know what kind of Evidence he may rely on as to Matters of Fact, which were done in a remote Country, or before he was born? Now if we can be certain of any thing without an infallible

fallible Judge, then Certainty does not depend upon Infallibility, becauſe we can be certain without it: Certainty of Knowledge depends upon the certainty of Evidence. What we have certain Evidence for, we may be certain of; and what we have not certain Evidence for, we can never be certain of. To depend upon Authority, though it be ſuppoſed infallible, is but one ſort of evidence, and one kind of certainty, *viz.* the certainty of Authority; and therefore if there be other kinds of evidence and certainty for our Religion, beſides the Authority of an infallible Judge, then we may be certain ſtill, though there were no infallible Judge: For where there are more means of certainty than one, the taking away one does not deſtroy all certainty; now I would fain ſee that man, who will venture to ſay, that we have no poſſible way to be certain of the truth of Chriſtianity, or what Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught, but only the teſtimony of an infallible Judge; for then there is no way left to make men Chriſtians, unleſs they will own an infallible Judge, before they believe Chriſtianity, which will argue great good nature in them.

Well! but ſuppoſe there were other poſſible ways to attain a certainty in Religion, yet there is none ſo eaſie, none ſo certain as an infallible Judge; which delivers us from tedious Inquiries, and doubtful Diſputes, and makes all men Orthodox whether they will or no: Now for this very Reaſon I reject an infallible Judge, becauſe it is very plain Chriſt never intended ſuch a degree of Evidence as this. Faith is a Chriſtian Grace and Vertue, and therefore muſt be an act of the Will, as well as of the Underſtanding, which ſuppoſes that the Evidence is not irreſiſtible; for it is no Vertue to believe that the Sun ſhines when we ſee it. Such Evidence as forces an aſſent, is inconſiſtent with the nature of Faith, conſidered as a Vertue, which is a free and voluntary aſſent,

upon ſuch Evidence as is ſufficient to ſatisfie an honeſt man, but not to compel an obſtinate Infidel or Heretick to believe. Of this nature is that Evidence we have for the truth of Chriſtianity. Miracles alone, as I obſerved before, did not prove Jeſus to be the Meſſias or Chriſt, for then all men, who ſaw his Miracles, muſt have believed him, as they did *Moſes*; but beſides this, they were to inquire whether his Perſon anſwered the Characters the Prophets had given of the Meſſias, and whether his Doctrine were reconcileable with their Law; and here the Paſſions and Prejudices and Luſts and Intereſts of men might interpoſe and corrupt and byaſs their Judgments, and whether they would believe, or would not believe, did very much depend upon the temper and diſpoſition of their minds. Hence our Saviour attributes the Infidelity of the Scribes and Phariſees to their Pride and Covetouſneſs, and ſuch like evil Cauſes, and requires an honeſt and teachable mind to prepare and diſpoſe men to receive the Goſpel. Such he calls his Sheep; *Ye believe not, becauſe ye are not of my Sheep, as I ſaid unto you, My Sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, John* 10.26,27. Now if this be all the Evidence he has afforded the World of his own being the Meſſias, which is the very Foundation of the Chriſtian Religion, the Superſtructure cannot be more firm and certain than the Foundation is, and therefore the ſame kind of Evidence which Chriſt thought ſufficient to prove himſelf to be the Meſſias, muſt be ſufficient alſo for all the ends of Religion. Chriſt has no Diſciples but ſincere honeſt men, and therefore has given us ſuch a degree of evidence and certainty, as may be a trial of our honeſty. It is of no concernment, whether bad men be Infidels or Hereticks; and then if there be ſufficient evidence and certainty to ſatisfie honeſt men, it is enough, and there is abundant Evidence for this purpoſe without an infallible Judge, and therefore there can be no need of him.

And beſides this, our Saviour has promiſed the aſſiſtance of his Spirit, not only to work Faith in all well diſpoſed Minds, but to enlighten their Underſtandings, and to guide them in the diligent uſe of thoſe Means he has preſcribed to find out Truth; which though it does not make them abſolutely infallible, which there is no need of to carry men to Heaven, yet it preſerves them from all great and fatal Miſtakes. Now I would deſire any man to tell me, what need there had been of the internal Illuminations of the Spirit to direct us in our inquiries after Truth, if Chriſt had provided ſuch an external infallible Means as a Judge of Controverſies.

And though honeſt men are not infallible, yet they have this ſecurity as to their ſpeculative Miſtakes, which have no ill influence upon their Lives; that the Mercies of God do as well extend to the infirmities of our Underſtanding, as of our Wills. For if an involuntary Ignorance will be ſome Excuſe even to bad men, to leſſen their puniſhment, much more may we preſume it will excuſe good Men.

To demand ſuch a degree of Evidence and Certainty, as God has not thought fit to give us, does great miſchief to Religion; for this makes ſome men Atheiſts, and others Infidels. The Infidel thinks, that ſeeing there is not Evidence enough for the Chriſtian Religion to force an Aſſent, therefore they are not bound to believe it; the Church of *Rome* owns this, That there is not ſufficient certainty without an infallible Judge; and hence they argue, That there muſt be an infallible Judge, and that the Pope, or Church of *Rome*, is that Judge. Now let the Infidel and the *Romaniſt* diſpute it out; which of theſe two is the beſt conſequence; that ſince we cannot be certain of our Religion, whether we ſhould wholly reject it, or ſet up a Judge of Controverſies; and in my Opinion the Infidel ſeems to have the better of it; for it is a natural and immediate conſequence not to believe what

we are not certain of, but I can ſee no connexion in the World between the want of Certainty, and the neceſſity of an Infallible Judge; ſomething to be ſure muſt come between to unite them together, and the leaſt we can think of is this; That it is neceſſary we ſhould be certain in matters of Religion, and that there is no way to make us certain, but an Infallible Judge; and therefore, ſince there is no certainty in Religion without ſuch a Judge, we muſt grant that there is one. But now if this be granted, that there wants Evidence to make Chriſtianity certain, how do they prove, that it is neceſſary we ſhould be certain of it? Which ſignifies, that it is neceſſary we ſhould be certain of that, which is not certain; and methinks it wants a little proof too, that a Judge of Controverſies is the only poſſible way to make men certain. I would adviſe all Papiſts not to preſs this Argument of the uncertainty of Religion too far, leſt when they come to conſider it throughly, it make them Infidels.

But if men will be but reaſonable, what greater certainty can they deſire than we have; The Revelation of the Will of God, contained in a plain and intelligible Writing, which all honeſt and diligent Inquirers, at leaſt with the help of a Guide, may underſtand in all things neceſſary to Salvation; the promiſe of the Divine Spirit to enlighten our Minds to underſtand the Scriptures, and to perſwade us of the reaſon and certainty of our Faith, and the Mercies of God to pardon involuntary Miſtakes.

Secondly, The next Pretence for an Infallible Judge is *Unity*. For we ſee by ſad Experience, that while every man judges for himſelf, the Chriſtian Church is divided into Sects and Parties, who firſt differ in their judgment of things, and then ſeparate from each others Communion; and thus it neceſſarily muſt and will be, till all ſubmit to one Sovereign Authority, and unite in one Viſible Head. And therefore ſince it is evident, that Chriſt

Chriſt intended that all his Diſciples ſhould live in Unity with each other, which he ſo ſtrictly enjoyns, and ſo paſſionately recommends; we muſt conclude, That he has appointed ſome effectual means to end all Controverſies, and to unite them in one Communion, which can be no other than an Infallible and Governing Head. Now in Anſwer to this I conſider,

1. That a Supreme viſible Head, as ſuppoſe the Pope of *Rome*, is not neceſſary and eſſential to the Unity of the Church; for if all Chriſtian Churches lived in Communion with each other, they would be one Church, though they were all equal, without owning the Supremacy of one over the reſt. And therefore that Chriſt inſtituted but one Church, and requires all the ſeveral parts of it to live in Communion with each other, does not prove the neceſſity of one Viſible Head, becauſe they may be one without ſuch a Head, and it is eaſie to prove, that this is all the Unity Chriſt intended; but of this in Anſwer to the following Papers.

2. Though Chriſt has made Unity neceſſary with the neceſſity of Duty, it does not hence follow, that he has appointed infallible and neceſſary means of Unity. I ſuppoſe all men will grant, that Chriſt has made Holineſs as neceſſary as Unity, and yet he has appointed no neceſſary and infallible Means to keep men from Sin; but we ſee the ſtate of the Church ſuffers as much by the Wickedneſs, as by the Diviſions of her Members; Unity is a neceſſary Duty, and ſo is Holineſs, but the practice of both is the Object of our own choice and liberty; and if the Commands and Exhortations of the Goſpel, and the hopes and fears of another World, with the aſſiſtances of the Divine Grace, will not make men do their Duty, I know of nothing elſe that can; and I do not ſee, how Chriſt is more concerned for the Unity, than for the Holineſs of his Church.

For

3. For, Thirdly, I think it a great Miſtake, to attribute all diverſities of Opinions to want of Evidence, and all Diviſions to diverſities of Opinions; for it is plain, that the Luſts and Intereſts of men have a great hand in both, or elſe both Hereſies and Schiſms are more innocent things than I took them to be. All the World cannot preſerve men, who have any Intereſt to ſerve by it, from being Hereticks; for Intereſt will make men teach Hereſies without believing them, or believe them without reaſon; and Intereſt and Faction will divide the Church, where the Faith is the ſame, of which the *Donatiſts* of old are a ſad Example. And there is a preſent and ſenſible Example of this, which the *Romaniſts* muſt own; and yet if they own it, it utterly deſtroys all their Pretences to Infallibility and Supremacy, as ſuch certain and infallible Remedies for Hereſie and Schiſm. For they muſt ſay, as they do, That Chriſt has veſted St. *Peter* and his Succeſſors, the Popes of *Rome*, with the Supremacy of the Church; here then is their infallible Cure of Schiſm: How then come all thoſe Schiſms that are in the Church? For there are a good number of them, notwithſtanding the Popes Supremacy, and ſome more for that Reaſon; Has not Chriſt appointed an Head of Unity? Yes; but other Biſhops and Churches won't ſubmit to him. How? not to Chriſts Vicar? How comes this to paſs? Why, they diſpute his Authority: And has not Chriſt plainly given him this Authority? Yes; but they won't ſee it: But is this inculpable Ignorance, or Pride and Faction? If the firſt, then they muſt grant, there wants certain Evidence for this infallible Head, and this they muſt not ſay; if the ſecond, then the Vices of men will make the Inſtitution of a Supreme Head as ineffectual to prevent Schiſms, as the Commands of our Saviour are; and it argues a good degree of Aſſurance in the Church of *Rome*, to pretend the neceſſity of an infallible

fallible Head and Judge of Controverſies, to prevent Hereſies and Schiſms, when though they ſay, That Chriſt has appointed ſuch a Head and Judge, yet the Experience of the World for Sixteen hundred years, tells us, That there are never the fewer Hereſies nor Schiſms for it; by which it appears, That this is not an infallible Remedy againſt them. Well! but it would be ſo, if all men would ſubmit to the Authority of this infallible Judge: Very right! and ſo any other way would do, in which all men would agree, for then I gueſs they would be all of a mind; but this gives no advantage to an infallible Judge above any other means of Union, and therefore the neceſſity of Unity does not prove the neceſſity of an infallible Judge. For if the *Romaniſts* be in the right, that Chriſt did appoint ſuch a Judge, and ſuch a Judge be ſuch an infallible Means of Unity, we ſhould have had no diſpute about it at this day; and therefore they muſt be out in one, either Chriſt has appointed no ſuch Judge, or this cannot prevent Schiſms in the Church.

4. Fourthly, There is an eaſie and effectual way of curing Church Diviſions without a Judge of Controverſies, nay, without making all men of a Mind in every thing; which muſt never be expected in this World: And that is, not to make the neceſſary Terms of Communion ſtreighter and narrower than Chriſt has made them; nothing but what is plainly revealed in Scripture, and is eſſential to Chriſtian Faith and Worſhip. For ſuch matters moſt Chriſtians agree in, and though they may have ſome private Opinions of their own, this ought not to divide Communions, while they do not impoſe them upon the Faith of others, nor introduce any new and ſtrange Worſhip into the Chriſtian Church.

As for Example: The Church of *England* believes and practices whatever was thought neceſſary in the Apoſtles days, and for ſome Ages after; and there is little or no diſpute about theſe matters between us and the Church of *Rome*, ſo that we could to this day, without a Judge of Controverſies, maintain Communion with the Church of *Rome* upon the ſame Terms, that the Apoſtolick Churches maintained Communion with each other, for we both agree in all things which are neceſſary and eſſential to Church Communion. So that the Schiſm between us and the Church of *Rome* is not for want of a Judge of Controverſies, for without owning ſuch a Judge, we agree in all that is neceſſary, in all that Chriſt and his Apoſtles required to make us Members of the Chriſtian Church. But this will not ſatisfie the Church of *Rome*, which will receive no other Churches into her Communion, without owning her Soverain and Supreme Authority, nor without believing many Doctrines manifeſtly abſurd in themſelves, and never taught in the beſt and pureſt Ages of the Church; nor without joyning in ſuch a Worſhip, which they themſelves dare not ſay is neceſſary (for they do not pretend that for their Praying to Saints, and Worſhipping Images, and Prayers in an Unknown Tongue) and which we think is Sinful. If theſe things were removed, we could gladly Communicate with them upon true Catholick Principles. There is no need of a Judge, but only to determine thoſe Controverſies, which She her ſelf has made in contradiction to the Primitive Faith of Chriſtians; and therefore I cannot but commend her policy, that She will allow no body to be Judge of theſe Diſputes but her ſelf. Would all men ſubmit to the Church of *Rome*, it would certainly reſtore Peace and Unity to the Church, but to the great prejudice of Truth, and hazard of mens Souls, and we muſt not purchaſe a meer external Unity at this rate. Thoſe men over-value Unity, who part with Truth for it;

for

for certainly the Unity of the Church is not more conſiderable than the purity of its Faith and Worſhip.

The Paper.

Theſe Reaſons make me think a viſible Judge abſolutely neceſſary.

Anſwer.

What I have already diſcourſed, I hope, may occaſion ſome new and different thoughts of this matter; but ſince Certainty is the great and prevailing Argument, let us turn the Tables, and ſee what Certainty a *Roman* Catholick has. His Faith is reſolved into the Authority of a viſible and infallible Judge. This I confeſs bids very fair, for he that follows an infallible Guide cannot err; but whoever conſiders this matter carefully, will find all this talk of *Infallibility* dwindle into nothing. For,

Firſt, Suppoſe there be an Infallible Judge, before we can with certainty and aſſurance rely on him, we muſt certainly know who he is; for it is the ſame thing to have no infallible Judge, and not to know where to find him. And this is a difficulty which thoſe Perſons little conſider, who pleaſe themſelves ſo much with the fancy of *Infallibility*. For,

1. Papiſts themſelves are not agreed about this matter. Some will have the Pope to be Infallible, as *Peters* Succeſſor, and in his right. Others, the Church aſſembled in a General Council; Others, neither Pope nor Council diſtinctly and ſeparately conſidered, but a Council confirmed by the Pope: Others, none of all this, but Tradition is infallible. Infallibility they all agree to, but know not where this Infallibility is ſeated. Now what ſhall a doubting Proteſtant do, who has a mind to be as Infallible as any of them, did he know where to find

this Infallibility? May he not as eaſily chooſe his own Religion, and what Church he will live in Communion with, as which of theſe infallible Judges to follow? Which ſoever of theſe he rejects, he has a conſiderable party of the Church of *Rome* on his ſide; the only difference is, that he is ſo far ſatisfied with their Reaſons againſt each other, that he rejects them all; and he has good Reaſon for it; for if God had intended to appoint a Judge to end all Diſputes, certainly he would have done this ſo manifeſtly, that there ſhould have been no diſpute who this Judge is: For methinks a doubtful and diſputable Judge is not a very proper Perſon to end all Diſputes.

2. Nay, according to the Doctrine of the Roman Divines, it is not poſſible to prove either that there is ſuch a Judge, or who this Judge is. For if there be ſuch a Judge, he muſt be appointed by Chriſt, and then we muſt look for his Commiſſion in the Goſpel; and yet the Church of *Rome* will not allow us to know what the Goſpel is, or what is the Senſe and Interpretation of it, but from the infallible Judge. And thus it is impoſſible to find out either the Judge or the Scriptures, becauſe we have no place to begin at. If we begin with the Judge, we are a little too haſty, becauſe we have not yet found him; and if we begin with the Scriptures, that is as bad, becauſe we cannot underſtand them before we have found the Judge; ſo that we muſt take one of them for granted without any proof, and by that find out the other, and that is neither better nor worſe, than to take them both for granted, which is an admirable Foundation for Infallibility, at all adventures to chooſe an infallible Judge, and then to believe him at all adventures!

So

So that though men, who have always been brought up in the belief of an infallible Judge, may in time grow very confident of it, and take it for a firſt Principle, which needs no proof; yet I wonder how any Proteſtant, who has been taught otherwiſe, and if he acts wiſely and like an honeſt man, cannot believe it, till it is proved to him, can ever entertain ſuch a thought; for let his Adverſary be never ſo ſubtil, if he reſolves to believe nothing but what he ſees proved, he may maintain his Ground againſt him. As to repreſent this briefly in a Dialogue between a *Papiſt* and a *Proteſtant*.

Papiſt. *I pitty your Condition, Sir, to ſee you live at ſuch uncertainties for your Religion, and obſtinately refuſe to conſult that living Oracle and infallible Judge, whom God hath placed in his Church, to decide all Controverſies in Faith and Worſhip.*

Proteſt. Sir, I thank you for your Charity; and though I do not find my ſelf ſo uncertain, as I perceive you think I am, yet I ſhould be glad of ſuch an infallible Guide as you talk of, if I knew where to find him.

Pap. *He is to be found in the Church of* Rome; *for that is the Church which is the Pillar and Ground of Truth; there is St.* Peter's *Chair, whom Chriſt made the Supream Governour of his Church, whom he commanded to feed his Lambs and his Sheep; that Rock on whom Chriſt promiſed to build his Church, and that the Gates of Hell ſhould not prevail againſt it; and therefore in Communion with this Church, and in obedience to the Supream Paſtor of it, you cannot err.*

Prot. But pray, how ſhall I be ſure of this?

Pap. *Do you ask that now, when I have referred you to ſuch plain Texts of Scripture for the proof of it?*

Prot. Will you allow me then to interpret theſe Texts according to my own private Judgment? and why then may I not uſe my judgment in other matters; for I think all the Articles of my Creed, are as plain in Scripture, as

that the Pope or Church of *Rome* is the Supream infallible Judge; and indeed if I muſt ſtand to my own judgment in this matter, I can find no ſuch thing in theſe Texts you have alledged.

Pap. *Your own judgment! no by no means, this cauſes all the Hereſies in the World, that men will preſume to judge for themſelves.*

Prot. What courſe muſt I take then?

Pap. *You muſt ſtand to the judgment of the Church, which cannot err; and whatever Hereticks ſay, ſhe will tell you, that theſe Texts prove the Churches Infallibility.*

Prot. Hold Sir, what is it we are to prove?

Pap. *That the Church is Infallible.*

Prot. And this I muſt prove from Scripture.

Pap. *Yes.*

Prot. And muſt not rely on my own judgment neither for the ſenſe of Scripture, but on the interpretation of the Church.

Pap. *Right! This is the true Catholick Way.*

Prot. That is, I muſt take the Churches word that ſhe is Infallible.

Pap. *No, You muſt believe the Scripture, which ſays ſo.*

Prot. But I muſt believe the Scripture, not becauſe I underſtand this to be the ſenſe of it, but becauſe the Church ſo expounds it.

Pap. *Right! For Hereticks expound it otherwiſe.*

Prot. And what is this then but to take the Churches word for her own Infallibility? What difference is there between taking the Churches word at the firſt or ſecond rebound? To believe it, becauſe ſhe ſays it her ſelf; or to believe it becauſe ſhe makes the Scripture ſay it? And therefore if this be all you have to ſay, I muſt e'en keep where I am, and rather content my ſelf without an infallible Judge, than pleaſe my ſelf with a meer imagination of Infallibility without any Foundation to rely on.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, And therefore the moſt learned Advocates of the Church of *Rome* are forced to grant, that we have no infallible Aſſurance of Infallibility; for we cannot be infallibly certain which the true Church is. The only way they pretend to find out the true Church, is by Marks and Notes of a Church, which they ſay indeed have a Moral certainty, though they are not infallible: For according to their Principles, they muſt not allow of any Infallibility without the ſentence and definition of an infallible Judge, for then Proteſtants may ſet up for Infallibility without a Judge of Controverſies; and therefore ſince there can be no infallible Judge to determine who is the Judge of Controverſies, they muſt content themſelves in this matter with Moral certainty; and this brings them to an even level with poor fallible Proteſtants. They deal very hardly with us, if they will not allow that we may have at leaſt as much certainty of the Authority of Scripture, and the true Senſe and Interpretation of it, as they can have of the Notes of the true Church, which muſt be owned for the infallible Judge; and if they be modeſt, and underſtand the weakneſs of their own Cauſe, they ought to be very thankful to us, if we will allow them as much; and may not we then be as infallible as they? For indeed it is impoſſible that any Moral certainty ſhould grow up into Infallibility.

As for inſtance: No man can be more certain of the Deciſions of an infallible Judge, then he is of his Infallibility; and therefore if he have not an infallible certainty of the Infallibility of the Judge, he can't have an infallible certainty that he defines infallibly: And thus the whole Faith of a Papiſt, after all their brags of Infallibility is reſolved into Moral certainty; juſt as the Faith of a Proteſtant is; only not with ſo much reaſon. Let us take any one Article of our Faith, wherein Papiſts and Proteſtants agree, and ſee how much greater aſſurance Papiſts

piſts have of it than Proteſtants: As ſuppoſe *that Jeſus Chriſt is the Eternal Son of God.* A Proteſtant believes this, becauſe he has all the Evidence that we can have for any thing of that nature; that the Scriptures of the New Teſtament were writ by inſpired men, and that the words of Scripture in their moſt plain and obvious acceptation ſignifie this, and therefore that this is the Doctrine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, who were infallible Teachers: So that the laſt Reſolution of our Faith is into the Infallibility of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which we have all the Evidence of which Senſe and Reaſon can give us. On the other hand; a Papiſt believes that Chriſt is the Eternal Son of God, becauſe the Church, which is infallible, teaches ſo; and he finds out the true Church by ſome Notes and Marks of a Church, which he thinks morally certain; and when he has found the true Church, concludes her to be infallible without more ado. Now if the Infallibility of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, be as good a Reaſon of Faith as the Infallibility of the Church or Pope of *Rome*, and if we have as good Evidence that the Goſpel was writ by inſpired men, and that ſuch words are contained in the Goſpel, as prove Chriſt to be the Son of God, as they have of their Marks and Notes whereby they find out the true Church, then we have to the full as much certainty and infallibility as they have. They have but a Moral Evidence at beſt of the Infallibility of their Church, and therefore are but morally certain that their Church teaches right; and therefore if we have as much certainty as they have (and God forbid we ſhould have no more) our Faith is built upon as ſure a Foundation as theirs, without making a noiſe with Infallibility, which at laſt dwindles into ſome Arbitrary Notes and Marks of a Church.

And yet Fourthly, not to trouble our ſelves at preſent with all the Notes and Marks which Cardinal *Bellarmine* and others give of a true Church, there is one Mark, without

without which it is impoſſible we ſhould be certain which is the true Church, and that is, that ſhe profeſſes the true Faith and Worſhip of Chriſt. For this is eſſential to the Church, and there can be no Church without it: all other Marks may deceive us; for whatever other Marks there be, if there be not the true Faith and Worſhip of Chriſt, there cannot be the true Church; and therefore when the ſtate of the Church, as it is at this day, is broken and divided into different and oppoſite Communions, whoever will find out the true Church, muſt examine her Doctrine and Worſhip. *Bellarmine* himſelf makes the Holineſs of Doctrine one eſſential Mark of the true Church, and yet Truth is antecedent to Holineſs, and equally eſſential. Now this is ſuch a Mark of an infallible Church, as makes her Infallibility uſeleſs, when we have found her. For we muſt underſtand the true Religion before we can know the true Church, and can be no more certain, which is the true Church, than we are which is the true Religion; and therefore cannot reſolve our Faith into the Authority of the Church, becauſe we can know the true Church only by the true Faith, and therefore muſt have ſome other means of finding out the true Faith antecedent to the Churches Authority; for that which is a Mark to know ſomething elſe by, muſt be firſt known it ſelf. So that whereas the Churches Authority is thought ſo compendious a way to make men infallibly certain of their Religion, and to deliver them from thoſe uncertain Diſputes that are in the World, we cannot be certain which the true Church is on whoſe Authority we muſt rely, till we have examined that diverſity of Opinions which divide the Chriſtian Church, and have ſatisfied our ſelves on which ſide the Truth lies; and when we have done this, it is too late to appeal to a Judge, unleſs we will undo all we had done before, and then we ſhall be to ſeek again which is the true Church. And what advantage

then

then has the Papiſt above the Proteſtant in the point of Certainty? When they cannot know which is that Church which they may ſafely truſt, without examining the truth of her Religion, and judging for themſelves, juſt as we do. We are concerned indeed to know which is the true Catholick Church, not that we muſt receive our Faith upon her Authority; for in order of nature we muſt know the true Faith, before we can know the true Church, but becauſe we are bound to live in Communion with the true Catholick Church of Chriſt.

Fifthly, And yet if they could find the Church without all this trouble, and Proteſtant uncertainty, whereever they place their Infallibility, whether in the Pope or Council, according to their own Principles, they cannot have ſo much as a Moral certainty of it. As for the Pope, though for Arguments ſake we ſhould grant a true Pope to be infallible, yet it is impoſſible that any man can be certain, that there is a true Pope. For the Church of *Rome* teaches, That the intention of the Prieſt is neceſſary to the Sacrament; that though he perform all the external part of it, yet if he do not intend to apply the Sacrament to ſuch Perſons, it is not applied. Now according to theſe Principles, who can tell whether this preſent Pope were ever Baptized, or ordained Prieſt or Biſhop; for if the Prieſts or Biſhops that did this did not intend to do it, he is ſo far from being a true Pope, that he is no Chriſtian. Nay, if the Prieſts and Biſhops which Baptized and Ordained him, did intend to apply the Sacraments to him, yet if thoſe who Baptized and Ordained them did not intend to do it, then they were no Chriſtians nor Biſhops themſelves, and therefore could not confer Orders on him, and ſo upwards ſtill, which reduces the matter to the greateſt uncertainty in the World; for how is it poſſible to know any mans private Intention, when neither Words nor Actions ſhall be allowed a ſufficient declaration of it: And beſides this, if

a Pope be Simoniacally promoted, or Ordained by a Simoniacal Pope, here is an Invalidity in his Orders, and then what becomes of his Infallibility? Nay, what ſhall we ſay of that long Papal Schiſm, when there were three Popes together, *John* 23. *Gregory* 12. and *Benedict* 13. who were all Depoſed by the Council of *Conſtance*, and *Martin* 5. choſe? Was there never a true Pope among all the Three? If there were, What Authority then had the Council to Depoſe them all, and chuſe a Fourth? And who knows to this day from whence the ſucceeding Popes have derived their Succeſſion? which may very much call the Popedom and Infallibility into queſtion. And then as for Councils, which conſiſt of Biſhops, there is the ſame incertainty about them, whether they be true Biſhops or not, as there is about the Pope; and beſides this, there are ſo many Diſputes, what makes a General Council when it is regularly called, and when they act *Conciliariter*, in ſuch a manner as a Council ought to act, to procure the infallible Directions of the Spirit, and to give Authority to their Decrees, that if Women and buſie People cannot underſtand the Scriptures, and the Reaſons of their Faith, I am ſure they are much leſs able to underſtand what Councils they may ſafely rely on.

But ſuppoſe we did know who this infallible Judge is, whether Pope or Council, and this Judge ſhould give us an infallible Interpretation of Scripture, and an infallible Deciſion of all Controverſies in Religion, which the Church of *Rome* never could be perſwaded to do yet, and I believe never will, witneſs thoſe many fierce Diſputes which are among men of their own Communion; and I think no man is ever the more infallible for a Judge, who will not exerciſe his Infallibility; yet if this Judge ſhould infallibly determine all the Controverſies in Religion, we muſt either hear it from his own Mouth, or receive it in Writing, or take it upon the report of

others. As for the firſt of theſe, there is not one in the World at this day, that was preſent at the Debates of any General Council, or heard them pronounce their Decrees and Definitions, and I believe as few ever heard the Pope determine any Queſtion *ex Cathedrâ*, which what it means, either they do not well underſtand, or have no mind to tell us. As for Writing; when we ſee the Decrees of a Council written, we can have only a Moral aſſurance that theſe are the Decrees of the Council; and when we have them, it may be they are much more obſcure, and ſubject to as many different Interpretations as the Scriptures are; that we can have no better aſſurance what the ſenſe of the Council, than what the ſenſe of the Scripture is; as Experience tells us it is in the Council of *Trent*, which the *Roman* Doctors differ as much about, as Proteſtants do about the ſenſe of Scripture; and though the Pope of *Rome* be made the Judge of the Senſe of Councils, yet if he will not determine it, what are we the better: If one Pope approves Cardinal *Bellarmin*'s Expoſition of the Council, and another *M. de Meaux*, though directly oppoſite to each other, as we ſee at this day, how ſhall we ever come to an infallible Certainty what the Council has determined? Has not a Proteſtant, who ſtudies the Scripture, and uſes the beſt Reaſon and Judgment he has to underſtand it, as much Certainty and Infallibility as this comes to? And yet how few are there, that have Time or Learning to Read the Councils, which is a little more difficult than to Read the Scriptures in the Vulgar Tongue; and all theſe Men muſt truſt entirely to the honeſty of their Prieſt, who, if he be honeſt, may be very ignorant, and yet the laſt reſolution of the Peoples Infallibility is into the honeſty and skill of their Prieſts; for how infallible ſoever the Pope or Council be, they know no more of the matter than what their Prieſts tell them, which is ſuch an Infallibility as the meaneſt Proteſtant has no reaſon to envy.

This

This I think is ſufficient to ſhew, how vain all this Talk of *Infallibility* is in the Church of *Rome:* though Proteſtants own themſelves to be fallible Creatures, yet they are too wiſe to change their Moral Certainty for the Popiſh Infallibility. Had the Church of *Rome* as good Evidence for their Faith as the Church of *England*, it might admit of a Diſpute, whether they ſhould reject both, or caſt Lots which to chuſe; but thanks be to God, there is no compariſon between them, and while we feel our ſelves certain, let who will boaſt of being Infallible.

AN ANSWER

To ſome other

ARGUMENTS

Contained in the

PAPERS.

HAving thus largely conſidered the main ſupport of the Roman Cauſe at this day, *viz.* the Pretence of an infallible Judge of Controverſies, the remaining Arguments will be more briefly anſwered, which I ſhall ſet down in order as I find them.

The Paper.

I don't know, ſuppoſing the Roman Errors not damnable, how the Reformers can juſtifie themſelves; and if they were ſo, I can't make it agree with the Promiſes of the Gates of Hell

Hell never prevailing, &c. *except there were ſome other Church in which Purity of Faith was preſerved; which if there were, I wonder for Unities ſake ſo much commanded in Scripture, we did not joyn with that pure Church.*

Anſwer.

In anſwer to this ſhort Paragraph, there are ſeveral things to be conſidered: 1. Whether the Errors of the Church of *Rome* be damnable. 2. If they be not damnable, what Authority had the Church of *England* to reform them. 3. If they be damnable, how does Chriſt keep his Promiſe to his Church, *That the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.* 4. Concerning the Purity of Faith in other Churches, and our Union with them.

1. As for the firſt, *Whether the Church of* Rome *be guilty of damnable Errors:* If by damnable Errors be meant ſuch Errors as put men into a ſtate of damnation, this I dare not ſay: For this would out-do the Church of *Rome* herſelf in uncharitableneſs, to aſſert that all the Churches in the Roman Communion, and every Member of them as ſuch, are in a ſtate of damnation. But if by damnable Errors be meant ſuch Errors as are very dangerous to mens Souls, and will greatly hazard their Salvation, or ſuch Errors as involve a Sin in them, as being a direct Breach of ſome Divine Law, and ſo are damnable as every Sin is damnable, in this Senſe we do ſay that the Church of *Rome* is guilty of damnable Errors. For to name no other at preſent, we do affirm and prove too, That the Worſhip of Saints and Angels and Images are expreſs Violations of the firſt and ſecond Commandments, and therefore are great Sins againſt God.

Now if you inquire, what the difference is between being guilty of damnable ſins, and being in a ſtate of damnation, the Anſwer is plain and eaſy: For a ſtate of damnation is ſuch a ſtate wherein, if a man commit

damning

damning ſins, he has no right and title to Pardon, Forgiveneſs, and Salvation, though he repent of all his known and unknown ſins. This is the condition of all thoſe who are not received into the Chriſtian Church by Faith and Baptiſm; for the Chriſtian Church only is a ſtate of Salvation; *For there is no other Name given under Heaven, whereby men can be ſaved, but only the Name of Chriſt.* So that thoſe who are out of the Church and Goſpel Covenant, are not only guilty of damning ſins, but are in a ſtate of damnation, for they have no Covenant-right to Pardon and Salvation. But thoſe who believe in Chriſt, and are in Covenant with him by Baptiſm, though they may be guilty of damning ſins, yet they are not in a ſtate of damnation, becauſe they have a right to Pardon upon their Repentance; and this is the Condition of the Church of *Rome*; they profeſs the true Faith of Chriſt, and are in Covenant with him by Baptiſm, and therefore though they may be guilty of damning Errors, yet they are in a ſtate of Salvation, that is, they are not excluded from the Covenant of Grace; and therefore the Members of that Communion, who live vertuous lives, and heartily repent of all their known and unknown ſins, may find Mercy with God. Thus St. *Paul* tells us of thoſe *who hold the* Foundation, that is, *Faith in Chriſt Jeſus, that if they build Hay and Stubble upon this Foundation*, that is, falſe and erroneous Doctrines and Worſhip, *ſuch a man ſhall ſuffer loſs in that his Work ſhall be burnt, yet he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire*, 1 Cor. 3. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. where Fire cannot refer to the Fire of Purgatory, becauſe it is the *Fire of the day of Judgment*, which is called *the day that ſhall be revealed by Fire*, verſe 13. and the Works which ſhall be burnt, is *the Hay and Stubble which is built on the Foundation*; that is, thoſe erroneous Doctrines or corrupt Worſhip which men retain together with the *Faith of Chriſt*; theſe Works ſhall be burnt, that is, condemned in that day which is revealed.

vealed by Fire, which conſumes thoſe Works, as Fire does Hay and Stubble: And as for the Perſons themſelves, the Apoſtle tells us that *they ſhall ſuffer loſs*, that *they ſhall be ſaved, but ſo as by fire.* Where to ſuffer loſs is oppoſed to receiving a Reward; if a man's Work abide, he ſhall receive a Reward; if any man's Work be burnt, he ſhall ſuffer loſs; which plainly ſignifies, that ſuch erroneous Chriſtians ſhall not receive ſuch a Reward as is prepared for ſound and orthodox Believers: And that Phraſe, *to be ſaved, but ſo as by fire*, at leaſt ſignifies, that at the day of Judgment ſuch men ſhall very difficultly eſcape burning with their Works, though they ſhall be finally ſaved by their Faith in Chriſt. But whatever be the meaning of ſome particular Phraſes in this obſcure Text, ſo much is very plain in it; that men who build Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation, *i.e.* who believe in Chriſt, though with a mixture of many vain and hurtful Superſtitions, ſhall yet, if their lives be holy and vertuous, be ſaved by the Faith of Chriſt, though with ſome loſs and hazard; which makes the caſe of honeſt men, who live in very corrupt Communions, not perfectly hopeleſs. And in this ſenſe it is that we grant, That Salvation may be had in the Church of *Rome*; though this is no Reaſon for any man to chooſe the Communion of a corrupt Church, becauſe there is a poſſibility of Salvation in it. However, this ſhews what a great miſtake this Paper is guilty of, where it is ſaid, *That the beſt Chriſtians in the Church of* Rome, *which believe ſuch damnable Doctrines, can be ſaved only by Ignorance, which moſt Proteſtant Divines believe the Pagans themſelves may be.* For though invincible Ignorance is an equal Excuſe for Pagans and Chriſtians, yet when this Excuſe is allowed, Pagans have not ſuch a right to Salvation as Chriſtians have. Ignorance may excuſe, but cannot ſave. It is only Faith in Chriſt ſaves us, which corrupt Chriſtians have, and Pagans have not, which is an eſſential difference.

Secondly,

Secondly, Suppoſe the Errors of the Church were not damnable, why might not the Church of *England* reform ſuch Errors as are not damnable? Suppoſe they only obſcure the Glory of Chriſt's Mediation, and are dangerous temptations to ſin, or hinder the Edification of the Church, or betray men to falſe Notions of God and of Religion, though they are not in themſelves damnable, why may not ſuch Errors as theſe be reformed? If the Church of *Rome* were convinced that ſhe were guilty of ſuch Errors, ought ſhe not to reform her ſelf? And is not every Church in duty bound to preſerve her Faith and Worſhip as pure and uncorrupt as ſhe can? And why then is not the Church of *England* bound to do ſo? If indeed the Church of *Rome* had a Supream Power over the Church of *England*, that nothing could be done without her Approbation and Order, then we would grant, that in caſe of tolerable Errors, ſuch a dependent Church could not reform it ſelf, without the conſent of its Superiour; as no private Chriſtian can reform the Church wherein he lives, without the conſent of the Governours of it. But we ſay, that every National Church has the Supream Independent Power within her ſelf, and therefore may correct any abuſes and corruptions which are crept into her Communion, without asking leave of the Biſhop of *Rome*, or any other Church in the World; and this juſtifies the Reformation of the Church of *England*, if ſhe reformed nothing but what was erroneous, though the Errors were not damnable; for all Errors ought to be reformed when they are known, if the Reformers have juſt Authority to do it; and ſuch Errors as are damnable, will juſtifie any man to reform himſelf, and all that he can convince of ſuch Errors; for every man has Authority to ſave his Soul.

Thirdly, If the Church of *Rome* be guilty of damnable Errors, how does Chriſt perform his Promiſe to his Church, *That the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt*

it? Now the difficulty of this Objection conſiſts only in the ſound of thoſe Phraſes, *the Gates of Hell*; by which ſome underſtand, that the Devil ſhall never be able to corrupt the Faith of the Church, for if he can do that, then ſay they, he prevails againſt the Church. But πυλαὶ ᾅδου ſignifie only deſtruction; for *Hades* is properly the ſtate of dead men, who are laid under ground, and appear no more in this World; and therefore when our Saviour promiſes, *that the Gates of* Hades *ſhall not prevail againſt his Church*, the meaning is, that there ſhall always be a Church in the World, profeſſing that Faith which here *Peter* had profeſſed, and whereon Chriſt promiſed to build his Church, *viz. That Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of the living God.* And ſuch a Church there has been in the World ever ſince; and the Church of *Rome* it ſelf, notwithſtanding all the Corruptions that are in it, is ſuch a Church.

But that the Church may be over-run with great and damning Errors, is evident from St. *Paul*'s Prediction of the Apoſtacy of the later days, *When the Man of Sin ſhall be revealed, the Son of Perdition, who as God, ſitteth in the Temple of God, ſhewing himſelf that he is God*, 2 Theſſ. 2. 3, 4. For whoſoever this Man of Sin is, he ſits in the Temple of God, that is, in the true Church of Chriſt; and while the Man of Sin ſits in the Church, we need not doubt, but he brings ſome damning Errors with him; and yet it is the Temple of God, even when the Man of Sin ſits there.

Fourthly, As for the laſt thing mentioned, it is ſufficiently known, that there were a great many Chriſtian Churches in the World, at the time of the Reformation, who did not own the Uſurpations of the Church of *Rome*; and though they might have Errors of their own, yet not of ſuch fatal conſequence: But if all the Chriſtian World had been equally corrupted at that time, it had been the ſame thing to us; for Corruptions ought to be re-

reformed, and we had Authority to reform our ſelves. And as for joyning in Communion with other pure Churches, we do ſo; we own all pure Churches, nay, are ready to communicate with Churches which have ſome Corruptions in their Conſtitution, if they be tolerable, and do not render their Communion ſinful, which is all the Obligation we have to communicate with any Church: For if by Communion they mean, that we ſhould have put our ſelves under the Government and Authority of any other Church, (which is the Senſe of Communion in the Church of *Rome*, which thinks no Church in Communion with her without ſubmitting to her Authority) we beg their pardon for that; we will communicate with other Churches, as Friends and Equals and Brethren, but not as Subjects.

Secondly, The next Argument for a viſible Judge, which the Paper inſiſts on, is, *That without ſuch a Judge, we cannot know that every particular Book of Scripture is Canonical.* And here are a great many Objections ſtarted againſt the Authority and certainty of the Canon, which much more become Scepticks and Infidels, than Chriſtians of any Communion. I do not think them worth tranſcribing, for this Argument may be anſwered without anſwering theſe Objections, which the Church of *Rome* is as much concerned to anſwer, as we. For thoſe who originally made theſe Objections, will not be put off with the Authority of a Judge, without a rational Solution of theſe Difficulties; and thoſe, who grant, that there is no other Anſwer can be given to them, but to reſolve the credit of the Canon into the Authority of a Judge without any other Reaſon, give up the Cauſe of Chriſtianity to Infidels, who deſpiſe the vain pretences of ſuch a Judge.

If we cannot know what is Canonical Scripture without a Judge, how ſhall we know whether there be a Judge? For there is no way to know this but by the

Scriptures; if there be no ſuch Judge appointed in Scripture, we have no reaſon to own him, and if we cannot tell what Scripture is without a Judge, how ſhall we find the Judge by the Scriptures? And though the Objection be made only againſt ſome particular Books of Scripture, yet in truth it equally lies againſt the whole Canon. For if we can know any one particular Book of Scripture without a Judge, why not the reſt? No! ſome of them have been doubted of; Right! by ſome Churches, who did not know them, till they were ſatisfied by thoſe Churches, which kept thoſe Sacred Records, that they were true and genuine. But the Queſtion is, Whether a Book, which has been doubted of, when that doubt is removed, have not as certain Authority as the reſt. If it could not then, and cannot to this day, be proved to be genuine, why is it received? What Obligation are we under to own it? If any Books, which we call Canonical, were ſtill doubtful, it is more natural and reaſonable to reject them, than to ſet up a Judge without any Authority, to give Authority to them. For whether any Book of Scripture be Canonical is matter of Fact, and the Doctors of the Church of *Rome* themſelves do not extend Infallibility to matters of Fact; and then by their own confeſſion, there can be no infallible Judge of the Canon of Scripture, but we muſt content our ſelves with ſuch Moral certainty as may be had. And if Catholick Tradition be ſo uncertain, that we cannot learn the Canon of Scripture from it, what becomes of the Authority of all their unwritten Traditions, which they ſo much boaſt of? Thus ſome men, if they can but make a ſhew of ſaying any thing, never attend to Conſequences, nor conſider whether their Objections do not make as much againſt themſelves, and common Chriſtianity, as againſt Proteſtants.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The laſt Argument is, That the Author of the Paper can't make thoſe Articles of the *Nicene* Creed, *One Holy Catholick Apoſtolick Church*, *the Communion of Saints*, agree with the Proteſtant Religion. Here is a little blunder in calling this the *Nicene* Creed, though eaſily pardonable; for it is a jumble of the Apoſtles and *Nicene* Creed together. *The Holy Catholick Church, the Communion of Saints*, is in the Apoſtles Creed; *One Catholick Apoſtolick Church*, the *Nicene* Creed. And why does not this agree with the Proteſtant Religion? For we profeſs to believe both theſe Creeds as ſincerely, as the Church of *Rome*.

No! How can they be One, who diſagree by adding in Faith, or diminiſhing from it, who do not communicate together in Prayer or Sacraments, when they are not agreed in the Eſſential things, how are they One? Right! Churches which differ in Eſſentials are not One, but I hope there are few Churches do that; I am ſure they can never prove, that we deny any Eſſential and Fundamental Article of Faith. If this proves any thing, it proves, That all the ſeparate Communions of Chriſtendom are not one Church; and what then? How is the Church of *England* more concerned in this, than the Church of *Rome*? Can't we believe one Church in the Creed, as well as the Church of *Rome*, notwithſtanding all the Diviſions of Chriſtendom? Do the meer Diviſions of Chriſtendom prove the Church of *Rome* to be that One Church, or that the Church of *England* is no Member of this One Church in the Creed? The Church is but One, from the firſt planting of it by the Apoſtles to the End of the World, and the Church of *Rome*, as well as We, muſt own, that it is but one Church, notwithſtanding the ſeveral Diviſions that have been in it in the firſt Ages of the Church as well as now; and therefore the Unity and Communion of the Church muſt not be eſtimated by any one Age of the Church; but the Apoſtolick

ſtolick Age muſt be the Standard of Catholick Unity and Communion, as it is of the Catholick Faith.

Suppoſe all the Churches of the World at this day were in Communion with the Church of *Rome*, excepting the Church of *England*. Why then, you'l ſay, it would be plain the Church of *England* were ſeparated from the whole Church of Chriſt, and from Catholick Communion. Right! from the Church of this Age; but the whole Church of this Age is but a very little part of the Catholick Church, were it ſound and Orthodox; for I hope they will allow the Apoſtolick Churches, and the Churches of the three firſt Ages, to be the beſt and pureſt parts of the One Catholick Church, and that we muſt ſtill maintain Communion with them; if then the Church of *England* were ſeparated from all the Churches of this Age, yet if ſhe be in Communion with the Apoſtolick and Primitive Churches, ſhe is in Catholick Communion ſtill, if the Apoſtles themſelves were in Catholick Communion. To know then, whether the Church of *England* be a true Catholick Church, and in Catholick Communion, we are not ſo much concerned to enquire what Churches ſhe communicates with now, as whether ſhe be in the Apoſtolick Communion; which is the Fountain and Original of Catholick Communion. Now if the Conſtitution of the Church of *England* be ſuch as to Doctrine, Worſhip, and Government, that the Apoſtles themſelves would have owned our Communion, had we been in their days; how do we come to be Schiſmaticks now, and out of Catholick Communion? For if Catholick Communion be the Communion of the whole Catholick Church, from the Times of Chriſt and his Apoſtles to the End of the World, which is but one Church; and the Apoſtolick Churches are the true Meaſure and Standard of true Catholick Communion, then thoſe Churches, which to this day are in Communion with the Apoſtles, are in true Catholick Communion.

And

And this Teſt we will ſtand by, though I would not adviſe the Church of *Rome* to do ſo.

Let us conſider, whether the Apoſtles would have rejected our Communion for thoſe Reaſons, for which the Church of *Rome* now rejects us? Would St. *Paul* have rejected our Communion, becauſe we will not worſhip God in an Unknown Tongue? which he himſelf Forbids, 1 *Cor.* 14. becauſe we will not worſhip Saints and Angels, and Images? which the *Romaniſts* confeſs, was neither Commanded nor Practiſed in thoſe days, and which we ſay was Forbid then, and underſtood to be ſo by all Chriſtians. For not owning the Supremacy of *Peter*, when St. *Paul* himſelf withſtood him as much, as we do the Pope of *Rome*, and upon a much leſs occaſion, *Gal.* 2. 11, *&c.*? And the *African* Churches long after, in the days of St. *Cyprian*, and by his Authority, forbad all Appeals to the Biſhop or Church of *Rome*. In a word, Would the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, the *Sacrifice of the Maſs*, *Indulgences*, *Purgatory*, *Communion in one kind*, *private and ſolitary Maſſes*, and the like, been thought a juſt Reaſon in the Apoſtles days to deny Communion to all thoſe Churches, which reject them?

The Church of *England* is in Communion with all thoſe Churches from the Apoſtles days till now, who never owned nor impoſed thoſe Doctrines and Practices, for which we now Separate from the Church of *Rome*, as neceſſary Terms of Communion, which upon Inquiry will be found a much more Catholick Communion, than that of the Church of *Rome*; for we Communicate with more Ages, and with more Churches than they do. The Church of *Rome*, as now conſtituted in all its parts and proportions, is no Older than the Council of *Trent*, which is ſome time ſince *Luther*; that we may with more Reaſon ask them, *Where their Church was before the Council of Trent?* than they ask us, *Where our Church was before Luther?* We find our Church in its Doctrine, Worſhip, and

and Government, in the Apoſtles days; but their Church was not made all at a time, but one Age brought in one Corruption, another another. Some aſpiring Popes began the Encroachments upon the Liberties of other Churches, and others kept the ground their Predeceſſors had got, and as they had opportunity made new Conqueſts, and thus by degrees it grew up into a Papal Omnipotency. Some thinking Monks ſtarted ſome uncouth Opinions, which were toſſed about for a while in Diſputes, and if they were ſuch as might be of uſe to advance the Power of the Pope, or of the Prieſt, they began to be countenanced at *Rome*, and that made honeſt men cautious of Oppoſing; and then they grew up into received Doctrines, and when it was ripe for that purpoſe, they were dubbed Articles of Faith; and at length were digeſted into method and order, refined and poliſhed, and received their laſt Authority from the pack'd Conventicle of *Trent*. And will any man call this Catholick Communion, the dividing Terms of which were wholly unknown to the beſt and pureſt Ages of the Church, crept in by degrees in ſeveral later Ages, and never received its accompliſhment and perfection till ſince the Reformation it ſelf, and is now already in the wane, and almoſt expounded into Proteſtant Hereſie (at leaſt ſo they would perſwade us) by the Biſhop of *Meaux*, and our Modern Repreſenters. However this ſhews, how among all the Diviſions of Chriſtendom, we can prove our ſelves to be a Catholick Church, and in Catholick Communion, which is all that we at preſent are concerned for; and let the Church of *Rome* do as much for her ſelf, if ſhe can. Upon theſe Principles ſhe now rejects us, it is plain, ſhe muſt have denied Communion to the Apoſtolick Churches, and I am ſure they would have denied Communion to her; and what is become then of her Catholick Communion, which ſhuts out the Apoſtles and Apoſtolick Churches?

The

The Paper.

And, how in the Communion of Saints? For that which I think makes a Corporation become a Body of Men, is the Obligation impoſed on thoſe who live in that Corporation, to be ſubject to the peculiar Laws and Government there eſtabliſhed for even of thoſe that make Scripture their Rule of all thoſe Churches.

Anſwer.

I ſuppoſe the latter part of this is either falſe or haſtily writ: If the meaning be, that the whole Chriſtian Church is ſuch a Corporation as is under the ſame individual Government, or one governing Head, who muſt give Laws to the whole Church; this we utterly deny, and it ought to have been proved. Chriſt at firſt committed the planting and governing his Church to Twelve Apoſtles, who, as St. *Cyprian* affirms, had all equal Power and Authority, though Chriſt named *Peter* only in beſtowing the Apoſtolical Power, not to give *Peter* any Superiority over the reſt, but only to ſignifie, That Unity and harmony of conſent, which ought to be among them in exerciſing the Apoſtolical Power, that they were all to act as one Man. The Apoſtles left their Power to the Biſhops of the ſeveral Churches, who had the immediate Inſpection, and Soverain Power over their own Churches, as the ſame Father frequently aſſerts, but yet were to govern their ſeveral Churches with mutual Advice and Conſent. So that the Unity of particular Churches conſiſts in their Obedience and Subjection to their Biſhop, and in the Communion of all the Members of it in all acts of Worſhip and Diſcipline; and thoſe who ſeparate from the external and viſible Communion of the Church wherein they live, without neceſſary and unavoidable Reaſons, are Schiſmaticks, who cut themſelves off from the Body of Chriſt. The Communion of the Catholick Church con-

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Anſwer.

I ſuppoſe the latter part of this is either falſe or haſtily writ: If the meaning be, that the whole Chriſtian Church is ſuch a Corporation as is under the ſame individual Government, or one governing Head, who muſt give Laws to the whole Church; this we utterly deny, and it ought to have been proved. Chriſt at firſt committed the planting and governing his Church to Twelve Apoſtles, who, as St. *Cyprian* affirms, had all equal Power and Authority, though Chriſt named *Peter* only in beſtowing the Apoſtolical Power, not to give *Peter* any Superiority over the reſt, but only to ſignifie, That Unity and harmony of conſent, which ought to be among them in exerciſing the Apoſtolical Power, that they were all to act as one Man. The Apoſtles left their Power to the Biſhops of the ſeveral Churches, who had the immediate Inſpection, and Soverain Power over their own Churches, as the ſame Father frequently aſſerts, but yet were to govern their ſeveral Churches with mutual Advice and Conſent. So that the Unity of particular Churches conſiſts in their Obedience and Subjection to their Biſhop, and in the Communion of all the Members of it in all acts of Worſhip and Diſcipline; and thoſe who ſeparate from the external and viſible Communion of the Church wherein they live, without neceſſary and unavoidable Reaſons, are Schiſmaticks, who cut themſelves off from the Body of Chriſt. The Communion of the Catholick Church con-

ſiſts not in the Subjection of one Church to another, but in the Profeſſion of the ſame Faith, and in the Agreement and Concord of their Biſhops, in owning each others Churches, and maintaining Communion with them upon Catholick Principles, and governing their Churches, as far as is expedient, by common Rules of Worſhip and Diſcipline. This then being the Conſtitution of the Catholick Church, let us briefly conſider, what it is that unites particular Churches in Catholick Communion.

1. Every particular Church which profeſſes the true Faith of Chriſt, is part of the Catholick Church, and by virtue of this Catholick Faith is ſo far in Communion with the whole Catholick Church; and thus we own the Church of *Rome* her ſelf to be part of the Catholick Church; for ſhe profeſſes the true Faith of Chriſt, though with a great mixture of dangerous Errors.

2. The Communion of particular Churches does not conſiſt in uſing the ſame Liturgies, or external Rites of Worſhip, if their Worſhip be a true Chriſtian Worſhip, and agreeable to the general Laws of the Goſpel; for every Church has Authority within her ſelf to direct and model her own Worſhip; and therefore if there were no fault in it, yet the Church of *England* is not bound to receive her Liturgies and Worſhip from the Church of *Rome*, but may uſe her own without being charged with Schiſm for doing ſo.

3. Every Catholick Church is bound to receive each others Members to Communion, when they come among them, which makes them all but one Church, one Society and Body, the Members of which have a mutual right and intereſt in each other; and therefore it is a Principle of Catholick Communion, not to adhere ſo ſtiffly to the Rites and Uſages of our own particular Churches, as not to communicate with other Churches, who uſe different Rites from our own, if they be innocent. Thus far all things are plain and eaſie; but the difficulty is, how we ſhall maintain

tain Communion with thoſe Churches, which teach very erroneous Doctrines, or uſe very corrupt and ſuſpected kinds of Worſhip. And therefore,

Fourthly, How corrupt ſoever any Church be, if ſhe ſtill retains the true Faith of Chriſt, we muſt own her for a Chriſtian Church, though a corrupt one, which is one degree of Communion with her, to own her of the ſame Body with our ſelves, though as a ſick or rotten Member. This was the Charge againſt the *Novatians* and *Donatiſts*, not only that they had ſet up a diſtinct and ſeparate Communion, but that they Un-churched the Catholick Church, and therefore Re-baptized thoſe who had been Baptized in the Catholick Communion, as if they had been Infidels before. So that if there be any true Church in the World beſides the Church of *Rome*, the Church of *Rome* muſt neceſſarily be Schiſmatical, becauſe She Un-churches all other Churches but her ſelf, and therefore can have no degree of Communion with them, as with Chriſtian Churches; whereas we own the Church of *Rome* her ſelf to be a true, though a very corrupt Church, and therefore maintain ſome degree of Communion with her.

Fifthly, For it is evident, That if any particular Church do teach any erroneous Doctrines, we muſt not maintain Communion with her in her Errors: for no Man is bound to believe that which is falſe. But then we muſt diſtinguiſh between Errors; for a Church may be guilty of ſome ſpeculative Errors, which may do no great hurt to common Chriſtianity, and then we may very ſafely communicate with that Church, if they do not impoſe on us the belief of thoſe Errors; which few Churches do, but upon their own immediate Members, excepting the Church of *Rome*. As for Inſtance; The *Lutheran* Doctrine of *Conſubſtantiation* is as falſe and groundleſs, though not altogether as abſurd as the *Popiſh* Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; but yet I would make no ſcruple of communicating with a *Lutheran* Church, where I may do it without profeſſing my belief of *Con-*

Subſtantiation; and upon theſe Principles the *Lutheran* and *Calviniſt* Churches may communicate together, keeping their private Opinions to themſelves without impoſing them upon each other. But if any Church which profeſſes ſome ſpeculative Errors, will not admit us to Communion without profeſſing the ſame Errors, we muſt own them for true Churches ſtill, and profeſs our readineſs to communicate with them in all acts of Worſhip, if we may be allowed to do it without owning their Errors; and this makes us in Communion with that Church, and that we do not actually communicate is none of our fault, but the fault of thoſe who deny it. If the Errors be ſuch as are not meerly ſpeculative, but corrupt their Worſhip, then indeed we muſt not only diſclaim their Errors, but we muſt not joyn in thoſe acts of Worſhip, which are corrupted by them; as the *Popiſh* Maſs is by the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*. If their Worſhip be partly pure, and partly corrupt, then notwithſtanding their Corruptions, we muſt be ready to joyn with them in all thoſe acts of Worſhip, which are not corrupted. If their Worſhip be generally corrupt, as it is in the Church of *Rome*, by their *Latin Service*, and *Maſs*, and *Ave-Maries*, and frequent Addreſſes to *Saints* and *Angels* in thoſe very *Litanies*, wherein they pray to God and Chriſt, we muſt wholly abſtain; but admoniſh and pray for them as Brethren, and exerciſe all other acts of Chriſtian Communion, if they will admit of any.

By this we ſee, that there are ſeveral degrees of Communion between diſtinct particular Churches, and therefore it does not preſently follow, that becauſe Churches divide Communion in acts of Worſhip, they do not belong to the ſame Body. The true Catholick Faith, whatever Errors and Corruptions they are guilty of, makes them ſo far Catholick Churches, and while we own them Members of the ſame Body, to which we our ſelves belong, though we do not communicate in their Errors and Corruptions, we are ſtill in Communion with them; and upon theſe Principles

ples, notwithſtanding all the Diviſions of Chriſtians, there is but one Church ſtill, to which all Churches belong, who profeſs the true Faith of Chriſt, unleſs any exclude themſelves from this Catholick Unity, by wholly excluding others.

Secondly, The next Inquiry in the Paper is, *How the Church can be called Holy, if for ſo many hundred years, as our Church teaches in the Homily againſt Idolatry, the whole Church of* Rome *has been guilty of Idolatry?* This being the whole of the Argument, I ſhall not tranſcribe the words. Now ſuppoſe the Church of *Rome* were the whole Church, and had for ſome Centuries been guilty of Idolatry in the Worſhip of Saints and Images, and the Virgin *Mary*; yet they belong to the Holy Church, juſt as they belong to the Church; by retaining the true Faith of Chriſt, they are a true Church, though the many Errors they have added, make them a very corrupt Church: And thus by profeſſing the holy Faith, and owning the great Principles and Doctrines of Holineſs, they are a Holy Church, though their Holineſs may be far from being perfect, intire, and uncorrupt, as well as their Faith.

When Holineſs is attributed to the viſible Church, it cannot ſignifie Internal Holineſs and Sanctification, for good and bad men are intermixt in the Church; and if the Church muſt be holy in this ſenſe, all the Members of it muſt be impeccable as well as infallible. But Holineſs ſignifies either their State or their Profeſſion. That they are in Covenant with God, and ſo his holy and peculiar People, as the Jews were under the Moſaical Covenant, who are therefore upon this account often called *a holy Nation*, even when they were guilty of Idolatry in worſhipping the Golden Calf, and had few viſible Marks of Holineſs in their Lives; and for the ſame Reaſon the Chriſtian Church, which now ſucceeds into the Privileges

es of the Jewiſh Synagogue, are called *Saints, the Elect and Choſen People of God*, to ſignifie that now God owns none for his People, but thoſe who are admitted into the Chriſtian Covenant. And in this ſenſe no Church can ceaſe to be a holy Church, without ceaſing to be a Church.

But then the Chriſtian Church is holy by Profeſſion too, and that in a more eminent manner than the Jewiſh Church, becauſe ſhe profeſſes a more perfect Holineſs; and whatever Church teaches the holy Commands of our Saviour, and requires and profeſſes Obedience to them, is ſo far a holy Church by Profeſſion, though ſhe may teach other things, which ſhe may think holy, but indeed are not ſo. If Holineſs ſignifie an External and Viſible Relation to God, and the Profeſſion of a holy Religion, then that Society which profeſſes the true Faith of Chriſt, and Holineſs of Life, ſo as to continue a Covenant Relation to Chriſt, is in this ſenſe a holy Church, whatever Corruptions ſhe is guilty of, either in Faith or Practice, which do not Un-church her.

Thirdly, As for what remains in the Paper, it has been anſwered already upon other Occaſions. Schiſm we confeſs is a damning ſin, and thank God that we are not guilty of it. We caſt off the *Roman* Yoke, which Chriſt never laid upon us, and to deliver our ſelves from the unjuſt Uſurpations of Foreign Churches is no Schiſm, no more than it is Rebellion to oppoſe the Invaſions of a Foreign Prince. We reformed our own Communion, and that is no Schiſm, for we had full Authority to do it; and our Reformation is ſuch, that they may communicate with us, though we cannot communicate with them, for there is nothing ſinful in our Communion; and whatever they pretend, they can never prove that there is any thing wanting in it, neceſſary to Salvation; and when we deny Communion to no Church that will communicate with us, and require no ſinful terms of Communion, which

which can juſtifie a Separation from us, let them tell me, wherein our Schiſm conſiſts.

The Paper.

I can't think thoſe glorious Promiſes ſufficiently fulfilled, of the holy Spirit's leading them into all Truth, and abiding with them, and that for ever.

Anſwer.

Pray why not? That Promiſe of *leading them into all Truth*, was made to the Apoſtles, and was fulfilled in them, and extended to no others in that degree of Infallibility; as is evident from the manner how the Spirit was to lead them into all Truth, *viz.* by bringing to their remembrance all things which Chriſt had ſaid to them, which can belong only to thoſe Perſons, who heard the Sermons and Diſcourſes of Chriſt himſelf. For though a man may be taught what he never knew before, yet he cannot be ſaid to remember what he never heard before. But when it is added, that this *Spirit of Truth ſhall abide with them for ever*, that *for ever* muſt be appropriated to the Apoſtles, as it relates to an infallible Direction; and their *for ever*, ſignifies no longer than they lived; for if it muſt be extended to all the Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, then there muſt be as many infallible Judges as there are Succeſſors to all the Apoſtles, in the ſeveral Churches founded by them, which will not ſerve the Deſigns of the Church of *Rome*.

As for what follows about *the Gates of Hell not prevailing againſt the Church*; I have already given an account of that; for *the Gates of Hell* never prevail, while there is a Church, which profeſſes the Faith which St. *Peter* then pro-

profeſſed, *That Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of the living God*, which the Church of *Rome* her ſelf has done in her greateſt Corruptions, excepting Pope *Liberius* his Subſcription to the *Arian* Confeſſion.

And whereas the Paper concludes with a deſire to know how the Church of *England* is Catholick and Apoſtolick, the Anſwer is very plain, Becauſe her Doctrine, Worſhip, and Diſcipline is Catholick and Apoſtolick.

THE

THE CONCLUSION.

An Addreſs to wavering Proteſtants, ſhewing what little Reaſon they have to think of any Change of their Religion.

WHat I have now diſcourſed in Anſwer to theſe Papers, ſeems to me ſo very clear and plain, that I ſhould not much queſtion its good Effect, even upon honeſt Papiſts, would they impartially read and conſider it, much more upon wavering Proteſtants, if it be only ſome Scruples, not Intereſt, which ſways them. But the better to fix ſuch People, and that in the Modern faſhionable way, without diſputing all the Points in controverſy, I ſhall deſire them to conſider, How much more Certainty and Safety they have in Communion with the Church of *England*, than they can have by going over to the Church of *Rome*. And I think this is home to the purpoſe; it being the ſame Argument, wherewith the *Roman* Prieſts endeavour to pervert our People; and which is the principal deſign of theſe Papers.

1. Firſt then I obſerve, That all the poſitive Articles of the Proteſtant Faith are owned and believed in the Church of *Rome*; we do not believe all that they believe, but yet

they believe all that we do; for our Faith is contained in the ancient Creeds, the Apoſtles, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanaſian* Creeds, which the Church of *Rome* owns, as well as we. And though we do not build our Certainty on the Authority of the Church of *Rome*, but on the expreſs Revelations of Scripture, which contain all the Articles of our Faith, and is as much Certainty as we deſire; yet methinks even a modeſt Romaniſt ſhould bluſh to charge our Faith with Uncertainty, when our Faith, as far as it reaches, is the ſame with theirs. Surely they muſt grant, that in theſe matters, which we all conſent in, our Faith is true and orthodox; they muſt grant, that the laſt Reſolution of our Faith into the Authority of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, is ſound and orthodox alſo; for thus they reſolve their own Faith: They muſt grant that the Univerſal Conſent of the Church in all Ages, not excluding the Church of *Rome* it ſelf, as a part of the Catholick Church, is the beſt External Teſtimony of the Chriſtian Faith. Now when we believe the ſame things which the Church of *Rome* does, upon the Authority of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, whoſe Doctrine is contained in the Writings of the New Teſtament, and expounded by the General Faith of the Chriſtian Church in all Ages, what appearance of Uncertainty can be charged on ſuch a Faith? We reject indeed the infallible Authority of the preſent Church of *Rome*; but what then? Will not a true orthodox Faith ſave us, unleſs we believe in Chriſt upon the Authority of a particular Church, which had no being, when Chriſtianity was firſt planted in the World?

But I think, I need not inſiſt on this; for I cannot believe that any Member of the Church of *England* goes over to the Church of *Rome*, becauſe he cannot believe his Creed in the Church of *England*. But then I would deſire them to conſider what that Uncertainty is which they complain of in the Church of *England*; for if the poſitive Faith of the Church of *England* is certain, as it muſt be, if the

the Faith of the Church of *Rome*, as to theſe Matters, be certain, why do they leave us for want of Certainty, which is now the Popular Argument to ſeduce men from our Communion? If they think, we do not believe enough, let them ſay ſo, and make that the cauſe of their departure from us; but if, as far as our Faith goes, we have certain and evident Reaſons of our Faith, how does our Faith come to be uncertain?

As for thoſe particular Doctrines, which are in diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, we grant we have no certainty of them; nay, more than that, we ſay no man can be certain of them, how confident ſoever he is; for they are founded neither on Reaſon nor Scripture, nor any good Authority, (for we do not take the Authority of the preſent Church of *Rome* to be good Authority) and if this be all they mean by our uncertainty, that we have no certainty for the worſhip of Saints and Images and Relicks, for Tranſubſtantiation, and the Adoration of the Hoſt, for Prayers in an unknown Tongue, for Maſſes for the Living and the Dead; for a Judicial Abſolution, and thoſe New Sacraments they have introduced into the Church, we readily grant it; but think this a very ſtrange Reaſon for Proteſtants to deſert our Communion, becauſe we have no certainty of things, which we believe to be falſe. We do not only confeſs, that we can find no certainty for theſe things, but we aſſert that we have poſitive and certain Evidence againſt them; and thoſe who have a mind to believe ſuch Doctrines as theſe, muſt go over to the Church of *Rome* to enlarge and improve their Faith, for we ſhall never believe them. But if they can be contented with the Faith which the Scriptures teach, and which the Primitive Church profeſſed, we have as much Evidence and Certainty for that, as the Church of *Rome* her ſelf has; and how they can better themſelves by going over to the Church of *Rome*, as to theſe Points, I cannot tell, ſince we believe as orthodoxly as they.

Secondly, As for thoſe Doctrines and Practices which we reject, becauſe we have no Evidence for them, but only the Authority of the Church of *Rome*, which is no Evidence to us, becauſe it is not evident it ſelf, we think our ſelves much ſafer in rejecting, than we could be in owning them; and that for this plain Reaſon, that though we ſhould be miſtaken in rejecting ſuch Doctrines (as we are very certain we are not) yet they are ſuch Miſtakes, as do no Injury to common Chriſtianity, no diſhonour to our common Saviour, and therefore cannot be dangerous to our Souls; whereas if the Doctrines and Practices of the Church of *Rome* be, as we ſay they are, Innovations and Corruptions of Chriſtianity, they are very dangerous and fatal Corruptions. As to ſhew this in ſome few Inſtances.

What Injury is it to Chriſtianity, not to believe the Infallibility of the Pope or Council, while we believe Chriſt and his Apoſtles to be infallible, which is Infallibility enough to direct the Chriſtian Church? For while we adhere to what they taught, we can neither believe too little nor too much; but if we believe the Infallibility of the Pope, we are bound to ſtand to his Authority, and to receive all his Dictates without examination, and how dangerous is this, if he ſhould prove not to be infallible, for then he may lead us into damnable Errors, and we have no way to get out of them.

While we own the Supremacy of our Saviour, who is the Head of his Church, and of all Principalities and Powers; and the Authority of Biſhops and Paſtors to govern the Church under Chriſt; what does the Church ſuffer by denying the Supremacy of the Pope, when Soverain Princes and Biſhops may govern their ſeveral Churches, as well or better without him? This indeed deſtroys the Papal Monarchy; but Chriſt is King ſtill, and the Church is never the worſe Church, becauſe it is not an univerſal Monarchy, which Chriſt never intended it ſhould be. But

if

if we give the Supremacy to the Pope, and he has no right to it by Chriſt's Inſtitution; this is an invaſion upon the Right of all the Chriſtian Biſhops in the World, makes it impoſſible for them to govern or reform their own Churches, whatever occaſion there be, without leave from the Pope, which very thing has hindred the Reformation of the Church of *Rome* it ſelf theſe laſt Ages, when it has been ſo earneſtly preſſed both by Chriſtian Princes and Biſhops of that Communion; witneſs the management of Affairs in the Council of *Trent*. Nay, this is an invaſion on the Rights of Soverain Princes, to ſet a Superior over them in their own Dominions, who can command their Subjects with a more Sacred Authority; and how fatal this may prove to Princes, and what a Snare and Temptation to Subjects, ſome Examples of former Ages may ſatisfie us.

Suppoſe we ſhould be miſtaken about the lawfulneſs of *Praying to Saints*, the Church of *Rome* her ſelf does not pretend, that it is neceſſary to do it, and therefore we want nothing neceſſary to Salvation by not doing it; and certainly our Saviour cannot think it any injury to his Mediation, that we ſo wholly rely upon his Interceſſion, that we deſire no other Advocates, and that we are ſo jealous of his Glory, that we will not admit the moſt glorious Saints to the leaſt Partnerſhip with him; and this will make him our Advocate indeed, when he ſees we will have no other: But if he be our *only Mediator and Advocate* by God's appointment, and his own purchaſe, let thoſe who unneceſſarily apply themſelves to ſo many other Mediators, conſider how our *only Mediator* will like it.

Suppoſe it were lawful to worſhip God or Chriſt by *Images*, which we think expreſly forbid by the ſecond Commandment; yet will they ſay, *That it is an affront or injury to God and our Saviour, to worſhip them without Images?* If that lovely Idea we have of God in our minds; if the remembrance of what Chriſt has done and ſuffered for us, make

make us truly and ſincerely, and paſſionately devout, what need have we of an Image, which is pretended only to be a help to Devotion, and therefore of no uſe to thoſe, who can be devout without it? But he who conſiders what Gods Jealouſie means, muſt needs think it dangerous to worſhip the Images of God and Chriſt, and the Saints, for fear they ſhould be forbid by the ſecond Commandment, which all the Wit of man can never prove, that they are not.

Though *Latin Prayers* were lawful in *Engliſh* Congregations, who do not underſtand them, yet is it unlawful to Pray in *Engliſh?* Is it any diſhonour to God, any injury to Religion, that men Pray with their Underſtandings? If true Worſhip begins in the Mind, and our Underſtandings muſt govern our Affections, I ſhould fear, that to Pray without underſtanding what I prayed, would not be accepted by that God, who is *the Father of Spirits*, and muſt be *worſhipped in Spirit and in Truth.*

If we believe, That Chriſt's once offering himſelf upon the Croſs, was a ſufficient Sacrifice, Propitiation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World, what injury do we to the Sacrifice of Chriſt, though we do not believe, that he is offered again every day in ten Thouſand Maſſes? If we believe, that in the Supper of our Lord we eat the Sacramental Body, and drink the Sacramental Blood of Chriſt, which by his own Inſtitution do as really and effectually convey to us all the benefits of his Death and Paſſion, as if we could eat his Natural Fleſh, and drink his Blood, what injury does the Church ſuffer by denying *Tranſubſtantiation?* And if when we approach his Holy Table, we worſhip Chriſt in Heaven, ſitting on the right Hand of God, Is not this as true an Honour to our Saviour, as to worſhip him under the Species of Bread? But if *Tranſubſtantiation* be falſe, what a hazard does that man run, who worſhips a piece of *Bread*, which the moſt learned *Romaniſts* themſelves grant to be Idolatry.

If

If we believe, That Chriſt alone has a Judicial Power to forgive Sins, and that the Church has a Miniſterial Authority, to take in or ſhut out of the Church, which is the only ſtate of Pardon and Salvation, and therefore is a Miniſterial remitting or retaining Sins, and ſufficient to all the ends of Eccleſiaſtical Authority, is not this as much Pardon and Forgiveneſs as any Chriſtian has need of, though we deny, that the Prieſt has a Judicial or Pretorian Authority to forgive ſins, which is not compatible to any Creature? For what can any man deſire more, than to be put into a ſtate of Pardon and Forgiveneſs in this World, and to be finally acquitted and abſolved in the next. But if the Prieſt have no ſuch Judicial Authority to forgive Sins, what a fatal Miſtake is it for men to rely on ſuch an ineffectual Abſolution? What a miſerable ſurprize will it be, for thoſe who thought themſelves pardoned by the Prieſt to be condemned by Chriſt?

Though we deny ſuch a place as *Purgatory*, is not the fear of *Hell* as good an Argument to bring men to Repentance? Or does it leſſen the Mercies of God, or the hope of Sinners, to ſay, That God remits all future Puniſhments, when he remits the Sin? But if the hopes of expiating their ſins in Purgatory, and of being prayed out of it, ſhould embolden any man in ſin, what a diſappointment would it be to find their Purgatory to be Hell?

This is ſufficient to ſhew, That we can ſuffer nothing by denying ſuch Doctrines as theſe, unleſs the cauſleſs *Anathema's* of the Church of *Rome* can damn us; but the hazard is ſo vaſtly great on the other ſide, the Miſtake will prove ſo fatal, if they be in a miſtake, that nothing leſs than an infallible Certainty can juſtifie the Prudence of ſuch a Choice, and therefore it is not fit for ſuch fallible Creatures, as we own our ſelves to be, to venture on them. We are ſafe as we are, and we think it beſt to keep

keep our ſelves ſo, though we had no other Reaſon for it, but that it is good to be ſafe.

Thirdly, Safe I ſay we are in rejecting theſe Doctrines, unleſs they can prove, that by rejecting them we want ſomething neceſſary to Salvation. There are two things eſpecially, wherein the Romaniſts think they have the advantage of us, and for the ſake of which ſome Proteſtants are perſwaded to forſake the Communion of the Church of *England*, for that of *Rome*. That they eat the natural Fleſh of Chriſt in the Sacrament, and receive a Judicial Pardon of all their ſins by the Abſolution of the Prieſt; which we confeſs we do not. Now ſuppoſe it were neceſſary to Salvation to eat the Natural Fleſh of Chriſt, and that Chriſt would not forgive any man, who was not before forgiven by the Prieſt, yet if theſe be the Inſtitutions of Chriſt, we have them as well as they; and no man need go out of the Church of *England* for them.

If the words of Conſecration, *This is my Body*, do by the Inſtitution of Chriſt tranſubſtantiate the Bread into the Natural Fleſh of Chriſt, theſe words muſt have the ſame effect, when pronounced by a Prieſt of the Church of *England*, as of the Church of *Rome*. And therefore if this were the Intention of our Saviour to give us his Natural Fleſh to eat, we do eat it as much as they; for we eat the conſecrated Elements, which are, whatever Chriſt intended to make them by the words of Conſecration. For our not believing Tranſubſtantion cannot hinder the virtue of Conſecration, if Chriſt have ſo appointed it; for the Inſtitutions of our Saviour do not change their Nature with mens Opinions about them. Thus Penitents in the Church of *England* may confeſs their ſins to a Prieſt, if they pleaſe, and receive Abſolution; and if by the Inſtitution of our Saviour, this is a Judicial Abſolution, then they have it, and need not go to the Church of *Rome* for it.

There

There are but two Objections, that I know of, that can be made againſt this; either that we have no true Prieſts and Biſhops in the Church of *England*, and therefore we have no Conſecration of the Elements; or that the Intention of the Prieſt is neceſſary to Conſecration, and nothing more is done, than what the Prieſt intends to do; and therefore no Prieſt can Tranſubſtantiate, but he who intends to Tranſubſtantiate.

1. As for the firſt of theſe; If there be no true Prieſts and Biſhops in the Church of *England*, there are none in the Church of *Rome*; for our Biſhops and Prieſts derive their Succeſſion from thoſe Biſhops, who received Orders in the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and therefore have as good Orders as they could give, and as they themſelves had; and if we have as true Biſhops and Prieſts as the Church of *Rome*, we muſt have as perfect Sacraments as they alſo.

2. As for the Intention of the Prieſt, That in the Church of *Rome* ſignifies no more, than to intend to do what the Church does; and why is not intending to do what Chriſt does, as good and perfect an Intention as this? And thus we all intend to do what Chriſt did; which is all the Intention that can be neceſſary to Conſecration, unleſs the private Opinion of the Prieſt can alter the nature of the Inſtitution. But the Truth is, If the Church of *Rome* depends upon the intention of the Prieſt for Conſecration, no Papiſt can ever be ſure that the Bread is conſecrated, and then to be ſure it is not tranſubſtantiated; and therefore, I think, they may compound this buſineſs, and allow us *Tranſubſtantiation*, if we will allow it them. We want it not indeed, and care not for it; but thoſe who lay ſo much ſtreſs upon it, need not forſake the Communion of the Church of *England* for that Reaſon; at leaſt have no Reaſon to ſay, That we want any thing neceſſary to Salvation.

Let us but obſerve the Inſtitution of our Saviour, and we need not fear, but we ſhall receive all the Spiritual Bleſſings, which Chriſt intended to convey to us in that Sacrament; which thoſe can never be ſure of, who do not obſerve the Inſtitution, but receive only a part of the Lord's Supper inſtead of the whole.

Were theſe things well conſidered, I perſwade my ſelf, no man would ſee any cauſe to forſake the Communion of the Church of *England*, where he has all things neceſſary to Salvation, without oppreſſing his Faith with Doctrines hard to be believed, or endangering his Soul by doubtful and ſuſpicious Practices at beſt.

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